



EpubPress

EpubPress - Sat Dec 09
2017

Charging the Hero

*Maou Dakedo Yuushano Koto Kokuso Suru Kotoni
Shitakara*

Arc 6: Second Trial

by Kawasaki Moe

[Novel Updates](#)

Translation Group: [Yoraikun Translation](#)

Epub: [Trollo WN/LN EPUB](#)

Emergency Ward

By the time I noticed it, I had fallen asleep.

When I next opened my eyes, it was early morning, my shrill ring tone urging me to wake up quickly.

The purposely unpleasant ringtone felt the worst on the ears, and raising my face pressed down against my table, I grabbed the phone.

I looked at the clock. It was currently 4:28.

Just who could be calling so early in the morning?

I looked at the phone display. It was a number I had absolutely no recollection of. The number wasn't withheld, so it was likely a real person, but if this was a prank call, I was just about ready to toss the phone and shatter it.

The unknown number came from the emergency room.

For a moment, I wondered who died. If there was someone around me prone to death, the Boss, I guess?

As I was thinking over it, the name 'Jessica Bellequese' came from the phone.

From the urgent voice, I could tell Jessica was in a terribly dangerous state.

Based on the hospital personnel's story, they had tried dialing all numbers on her phone from top to bottom, and when no one was answering, I had finally picked up.

Since she was in a dangerous state, he wanted any persons concerned to go at once.

It felt as if I had a bucket of cold water poured over me. That Jessica's in a critical state? And she was on death's door?

The person I imagined to be furthest from death was dying.

Once the phone cut, I immediately left the house. There was some distance to the emergency ward, so I grabbed a taxi.

When I told the driver my destination, the forty-year-old at the wheel inferred

my situation, sharply accelerating and blasted his engine.

Ten minutes, twenty, as time flew on by, I arrived at the hospital. Running through the dim hallway, I heard the place from the nurse at receptions and continued running on.

In the depths of the emergency ward, where only emergency cases were delivered, the special room. I found her there.

The emergency procedures were already done. But there was no knowing what would happen.

... The hell's that supposed to mean.

I got the doctor's permission for a meeting, and visited her in the special treatment room.

Sleeping on the bed, unlike the splendid complexion she had yesterday, she had lost too much blood, and her skin was pale.

... No trace of her good health remained.

All over her body were inserted tubes. From the tubes flowed some unfamiliar liquid, simultaneously sucking unneeded fluids from her body, it seems.

There's no way she could have lived on her own. It was a state where only the machines were saving her.

As I approached the bed, her half-closed eyes turned to look my way.

Her lips were pale. Probably paler than even Samantha's.

She opened her mouth to say something.

"What?"

When I came closer, she said, "I'm sorry," in a small voice.

"About what?"

"I stole it."

It? What is she talking about?

Something stolen... "The crystal?"

She probably tried to nod. Her half-open eyes closed thin, and she tried lifting her head. But without the necessary stamina to accomplish the feat, her head only gave a slight quiver.

What was I supposed to say? I couldn't find the words.

Should I shout at her that she was a fool?

Should I tell her she didn't have to worry about it?

Both of them seemed wrong, and I felt the answer was somewhere else.

"That was something important. Perhaps it would have become crucial evidence in today's trial."

... What am I even saying?

But once the words started coming out of my mouth, they didn't seem to stop.

"You've sure gone and done it."

Jessica opened her mouth again. It seems she said, "I'm sorry, but this time her voice was too small for me to hear."

"So where is it?"

"It was stolen... so I can't give it back."

After saying that much, Jessica closed her mouth, and closed her eyes. A light tear spilled from her eyes, travelling down her face, and eventually soaking the pillow.

Despite how painful it truly must be, there was currently an anesthetic working on her entire body, so she couldn't feel pain. Yet even so, some part of her hurt as she gave a pained expression.

Pip, pip, pip, the ECG resounded through the room well.

With all the instruments hooked up to keep her alive, all Jessica could do was maintain her consciousness. That was all.

If her mind was cut off once, it felt as if that would be the moment of her death.

When I gently stroked her green hair, she slowly opened her eyes.

“I thought... no one would come.”

“That’s not true.”

“I don’t have a family.”

In that voice from which I felt no ambition or spirit, Jessica spoke terribly slowly.

“I don’t have any friends. While there are people who hate me, I don’t have anyone who’ll ever say they like me. I’m an unnecessary person.”

“...”

I... I... gently grabbed her hand.

“I’m here, aren’t I?”

“mr... daniel. Will you stay there forever?”

Her voice was teary. She simply cried childishly a girl desperately pleading was before me.

“I can’t. The trial is today. I can’t stay forever.”

“Stingy. Stingy, stingy, stingy...”

“I’ll come again later. I haven’t paid your reward yet, right?”

“It’s fine. I’m done. I won’t want to stay anymore.”

“Don’t say something like that.”

Ah, thank god. I finally found the words I wanted.

Extremely simple, and clear, without twists or tricks, they were words anyone could come up with, but I felt I couldn’t find any words more correct.

“Try living a bit longer.”

“What’s living going to do for me?”

Biting her lip, Jessica spoke.

“You get cheated, betrayed, hated... all your precious people go away. I don’t want to live anymore.”

“You had it hard.”

I lightly stroked her head.

“Living is hard. But you see, it’s your fault for trying to live through it alone.”

“Eh?”

“Depend on them. If you learn to depend on others, life becomes quite a fun thing.”

For a while, I stayed there.

An hour, then two, I cheered Jessica up.

When the time came around, I left the sickroom. I wanted to do it a little longer, but there was another, another person I had to go save.

It was still morning outside the emergency ward. It seems the sun was finally starting to rise, and the sky opposite to the sun retained traces of a pale violet.

It was only a matter of time before the remnants of the darkness disappeared. I returned to my house once, and prepared myself. At that moment, I unexpectedly stumbled upon a certain document.

A paper I’d picked up in the library. Looking at the page I happened to open up, I finally noticed the identity of the crystal balls.

Passage

The preparations were ready.

I learned a variety of truths.

There was still a lot I didn't now, but I could see the general path.

Then what was it I could do?

Believe in the defendant. That was about it. All an attorney could do was believe in their client, and protect them.

I left the room. My heart was strangely calm down the path to the district court. Before long, I passed through the court gates and their bold sense of presence.

There were guards to the sides of the gate. For some reason, they looked more psyched up than usual.

... Come to think of it, I couldn't go visit her.

I didn't have the time. And once the trial began, I'd see her whether I wanted to or not.

Passing through the court lobby, while I headed for the defense's waiting room, I heard the scraping sound of high heels from behind.

Prosecutor Caitlin Schaefer.

She was making an especially sullen face as she walked my way. When she finally noticed my existence, her mouth formed a wicked smile.

"Oh my, you're here early. Are you sure you're ready?"

"I'm... ready."

I took a step forward. Cate's sharp eyes shined down on me. If I let myself be overpowered for a moment, I felt I'd be atomized in the blink of an eye.

"What are you hiding?"

On my question, Cate went expressionless for a second. Thinking over those

words, she narrowed her eyes, and sent me an appraising look.

“Hiding? What? You want my three sizes?”

“Answer me seriously!”

I unintentionally shouted out.

“You’ve already noticed, haven’t you?”

“Noticed what?”

“That Claudia isn’t the culprit.”

“There’s no evidence.”

“There’s no evidence she is, either.”

Cate let out a deep sigh, before shrugging her shoulders.

“Innocent until proven guilty, that’s the judge’s motto, right? I’m a prosecutor. The proving part is my job.”

“So you’re fine with false charges?”

“Aren’t you misunderstanding something?”

Cate spoke as she poked her right hand’s index finger into my chest.

“That’s your job, right? Us prosecutors, you see, we use whatever little evidence we have to indict those society’s nicknamed criminals. There’s no way you can know if the charges are false, and there’s no way of knowing about the culprit. Especially in the case of magicians, we’re forced to prosecute with no leads at all. We have to fight crime in a state with absolutely nothing behind us.”

... That’s the world we live in, said Cate.

“If I lower my hand in doubt that my charges are false, letting the true big bad slip through my fingers, how do you expect me to apologize to the virtuous citizens of our society? Don’t kid around with me. I’ll perform to the best of my abilities as a prosecutor. If you’ve got any complaints, then defend for your life, and come out on top.”

... Isn’t that all there is to it? Cate thrust me away, and left with an air of

composure.

I couldn't say anything back. Neither did I plan to.

It's just as she said. I'll prove it to her.

I turned back, and headed for the defense's waiting room.

December 11th: Court in Session Again

Rabble.

Rabble rabble rabble.

Rabble rabble rabble rabble rabble...

Was the visitor's gallery this noisy last trial?

What greeted me upon entering the court was a peculiar heavy our clearly exceeding what I experienced last trial.

It's true last trial's gallery was fully booked. But if I had to say, the ones from that time were court enthusiasts curious about a murder case, or journalists interested in a scoop who just happened to come by and peek in by chance.

But this time's court was ruled by a more bizarre sort of zeal.

... Were we getting attention?

Just what had happened in those few days I was off investigating?

I got my answer as soon as the defendant stepped in.

The door opened. From beyond, an unmistakable beauty. The defendant in this case, Claudia Rheinland appeared.

It had only been a few days since we last met, but it felt as if that meeting was quite a long time ago. And I thought once more.

... This kid's no ordinary person after all.

Her black hair fluttering, with her cold eyes turned straight ahead, she preciously held the holy sword in both hands as she boldly took a seat on the defendant's bench.

She wasn't handcuffed anymore. With not the slightest restraint on her, she saw with exceedingly calm mannerism. With her back up straight and her sword simply placed across her lap, her form bathed in all sorts of inquisitive eyes, rather than a criminal, it was...

... A hero?

There's something wrong.

There was something considerably wrong.

There were no heroes here. All that was here was a defendant, a judge, a prosecutor... and an attorney.

... I see. So the people in the gallery came to see Claudia.

It finally hit me.

In general, photos were banned in a court of law. Conveying situation in the court depended on a specialized court sketcher artist.

They would be stand-ins for a camera man.

I thought as I looked over the gallery.

Generally, there was only one sketch artist in court. Unlike the clerk, they just had to draw the situation in the court, so one painter was plenty.

But in today's trial, there were at least ten painters. They were all painting Claudia from separate angles, some even desperately painting as they stood on their tip toes.

If guilty—the cruel, calculating, cutthroat beauty.

If innocent—a miraculous turnabout, the goddess of victory smiles. I could already see the headlines.

We were gaining attention. Even if they didn't listen to the trial, anyone could browse the records, so I'm sure the audience in those seats had already filled their heads with the last trial's happenings.

First degree murder, and a peerless beauty.

The perfect pair, is it not? This is quite the scoop ain't it ya' bastards.

"Um, Mr. Lawyer."

The dock was close to the defense's desk, or rather they were practically touching one another, so there wasn't much distance between me and Claudia. She turned towards me, and sent me a fixated glance.

"Um, are you okay?"

“Hmm? Y-yeah, I’m fine.”

“Really? I somehow get the feeling you’re more haggard than last I saw you.”

I found myself touching my face.

... Come to think of it, I haven’t gotten any decent sleep these past few days.

Get a grip, man!

I clapped down on my own face. Perhaps I had put in a bit too much power, as a powerful slapping sound echoed through the court.

“I’m fine. It won’t affect your defense.”

Her eyes blinked as she made a somewhat anxious face.

“I’m telling the truth. Trust me a bit.”

“... I do trust you.”

Claudia picked up her sword, and hugged it tight to her chest.

“I’m just scared.”

Claudia closed her eyes, and bent her spine to look down. Her silky black hair dropped down, obscuring her expression.

“I got to learn a bit about this world.”

“Hmm, from who?”

“Um, the female prisoners at the detention center.”

... I hope she wasn’t taught anything strange.

“People much older than me, and younger, I got to talk to all sorts of people. They all carried their own upbringings, and while they were a bit unhappy, some part of all of them was looking towards the future.”

... The female prisoners were? I think that’s a problem in itself.

I wanted to retort, but as we were having a serious conversation, I held down my impulse.

“But everyone was scared of death.”

Claudia quietly muttered.

“Scared of death, hating it, doing whatever they could to avoid it, they all looked desperate.”

... They were desperate to be saved.

“When none of them had committed a crime heavy enough for a death sentence, why were they all so scared? At the start, I couldn’t understand it all.”

... But it came to me yesterday, said Claudia.

“Being forgotten from society isn’t living. It’s death. Being within those walls is the same as death.”

... I was dead.

“Dead?”

I put my question to mouth.

“That’s right. It was the same as if I wasn’t there. I mean, no one knew that I was alive... I hadn’t lived any of the eighteen years I spend in that forest. I was dead.”

... That’s why it was so painful. And I was so delighted.

“It’s not like I wanted to kill the demon lord. In truth, I never cared about anything like that. I just wanted someone to know I was there, I existed.”

“... I see.”

“But I never should have done such a thing. I want to live more. I don’t want to die. Do you think I’m a selfish person?”

“I do,” I replied at once. And continued on, “You’re a child, so become more selfish.”

“Eh?”

“don’t give me an ‘eh’!”

Her face was so blank I slapped her on the back.

“Eek!”

“Fire yourself up. Show some more motivation. Be more selfish. Assert your legal rights. You’re a human. No one will be able to tie down your actions. If you

committed a crime, then accept it. If you didn't give a firm opposition. Don't mind other people. Just leave your support to me."

... I'm a professional, I said to finish. Claudia circled one hand around to rub her back. "Okay. I'll leave it to you!" she smiled.

The door opposite to where we were opened.

The prosecutorial assistant appeared from the door first. Following along, the sound of high heels played a symphony for Caitlin Schaefer's appearance.

She's already the bright shining star of the courtroom, I thought as I looked at the gallery's reaction to her appearance.

Silent from beginning to end, even after taking her seat at the prosecution's side, Cate kept silent, closing her eyes, crossing her arms, with her head tilted up.

She'll do her utmost to make Claudia guilty.

I need to take that on.

Before long, two clerks, and the judge in silk robes took their seats.

Whap! The judge's gavel sounded. The courtroom went silent at once, and after clearing his throat, the judge spoke.

"Then it is time for us recommence the deliberation."

The second trial was in session.

Summary, and then...

“Well then...” The judge made a conflicted expression as he looked over. First at the prosecution, then at me, and finally confirming the defendant, “It seems everyone’s gathered, it’s about time we restarted the trial.”

“In the previous hearing, there was a problem presented about the video of the defendant attacking the victim. Looking at the contradictions between each piece of footage, the defense raised an objection that perhaps the dates of the videos were actually off...”

Prosecutor Schaefer crossed her arms, continuing on after the judge.

“The security camera footage. Regardless of the snow piled in the footage of the park, there was the problem raised of the roof’s viewing platform having no snow at all.”

“Yes. Thinking back, that was the trigger for the trial’s extension.”

“Good grief, what a bother.”

... Why!?

The judge with his grim expression. And seeing the prosecutor nod along with him, I wanted to retort.

“But as long as we’ve discovered a contradictory point, there is a need to make it clear. Does the prosecutions have any objections?”

The female prosecutor undid her arms, taking a bundle of documents from prosecutorial assistant Eugene.

Flipping through the bundled documents page by page, she answered, “Of course, m’lud. The prosecution has a clear answer in regards to that.”

...! Eh? She can answer?

To think she’d go right into crumbling last trial’s doubt, I felt a little dizzy.

“Why was there snow piled up in the park but not the roof on November 11th? The answer is simple. They shoveled the snow.”

“What?”

“As I expressed last trial, there was snow falling at Westminster Hotel on November 11th from eight to four. The snow stopped at four, and with the heavy snowfall, the scene wasn’t in a state suitable for anyone to walk.”

“I-I’m sure. Then snow must have built up on the viewing platform after all, right?”

“My. Lawyer,” Prosecutor Schaefer raised her chin, as if she was looking down on me. I’m sure she actually was looking down on me.

“As I just said, they shoveled the snow.”

“B-but the hotel was closed all through November.” I recalled the results of my investigation the other day, and refuted.

“On the day of the incident, there weren’t any employees at the hotel.”

“And that’s just employees, right? It’s not as if there were no people at all.”

“Do you mean the people working in the basement? If you’re talking about them, then...”

I recalled the guard’s words.

“They are habitually late. As the hotel is closed, the manager is off on a different job, and using that to their advantage, the basement staff don’t come to their work stations on time, it seems.”

... Bang! I slammed the desk, leaning forward as I objected.

“On a day without anything, for those who don’t even abide the time, there’s no way they’d specifically come to work early specifically on a snowy day. More than that, let alone late, there was a possibility they wouldn’t come at all!”

... Fufu, the prosecutor laugh. An extremely pleasant laugh.

“Ahahahahaha! Let alone come late, they’d play hookey! Ahahahahaha! That’s quite the accusation there! What’s with that, let alone evidence, that’s just plain prejudice!”

“P-prosecutor Schaefer?”

On her sudden outburst, the gallery started acting up.

“Hihihihi, kukukuku, yeah, yeah, you’re right. That’s right. It’s just as the defense says! He has not a shred of evidence, but I’ll agree with his objection.”

Her laughter finally contained, Prosecutor Schaefer took a deep breath, and with a cold look, she glared at me.

“The defense’s objection just now wasn’t mistaken, m’lud. As a result of police investigation we discovered, on November 11th, not only the Hotel’s regular staff, the outside workers were absent as well.”

“I see. So all of them were out. Where are you taking this?”

“It’s simple.”

Prosecutor Schaefer spoke with an ill-natured smile.

“Sabotage. That’s all.” The female prosecutor slammed a document down on the table, letting out an overly threatening voice. “On November 11th, there were no workers in the hotel. The staff admitted it, so there’s no doubt about it.”

“Hmm. That’s well, I can’t praise it.”

Meaning my conjecture was right?

... No, wait. If that’s the case, who the heck are you saying shoveled the snow?

“But there was one.”

Prosecutor Schaefer continued disinterestedly.

“On a snowy day. As everyone refused to work, hating troublesome things, only one diligent lad made his way to the hotel, and did his job.”

“That person would be...”

I looked through my memory.

November 11th. All hotel workers were off, and the basement floor staff were on holiday (skipping) as well.

In that case... one, I do have an idea.

But that’s not possible. She should keep her jokes to a minimum.

I felt something cold slowly run up my back.

“On November 11th. The person who wasn’t part of the hotel’s regular staff, and wasn’t a basement worker. It was the only person at the scene. It would have to be... security guard, Hal Anderson.”

“The victim shoveled the snow? But that’s...”

Well if she says that, I guess it throws off my theory, but...

Hal Anderson was attacked not on the 11th, but the 10th. That’s the conclusion I drew from Claudia’s testimony. But if evidence came that the victim shoveled snow on the 11th, that theory would come to an end.

Evidence? Right, evidence.

“What evidence do you have?”

“...” Prosecutor Schaefer kept quiet. Tightly sealing her lips, she looked to be observing me.

“If you’ll say that much, do you have any evidence?”

“I have... no evidence.”

She calmly said it as if it were natural, before continuing on.

“But I have a witness.”

... A witness, you say? Who?

I can’t even guess anymore. At the time, the only one at the hotel should have been a single security guard.

No, perhaps a visitor who came to see the viewing platform? The hotel was free use, so there was plenty of possibility a third party came and witnessed something.

“A person you all know well.”

Prosecutor Schaefer opened the prosecution side door, and continued on.

“Then witness, please enter.”

Someone came out of the door. On that small amount of effort, they gathered the eyes of the people.

The light was on. I could see his face. It was a man's face. Black, long hair, and a sharp look in his eyes. A nose well in order.

Identical to a face I'd seen in a picture. And one I'd seen on video as well.

"Eh? Why?"

Claudia suddenly stood, her shoulders shaking.

"P-prosecutor Schaefer. What is the meaning of this?"

The judge's voice shook as he said the most logical thing possible.

"There's no meaning behind it. The one here is Hal Anderson, the eye-witness who saw it all unfold, and my witness!"

"Q-quit screwing around!"

I cried out, pointing my finger.

"Then he should be dead!"

"Yes, he died."

... But he came back. Prosecutor Schaefer said it quite naturally.

The Definition of Death

“This is unprecedented and absurd!”

I pointed at the prosecutor as I spoke to the judge.

“Something like the dead coming back to life, I’ve never heard anything of it in my entire life!”

The judge was taken aback, his eyes left blinking as he looked at the prosecution, the victim from his head to his toes, and toes to his head a number of times.

“Yet another mystery...”

The gallery was restless. There were some leaning forward to get a better look of the victim, and some holding their mouths open blankly.

But the most surprised, perhaps, was Claudia herself. She stood with her whole body frozen, without even the slightest twitch. Without blinking, her eyes remained sharply focused on the victim.

Of course, Hal Anderson himself took on the surrounding atmosphere as something that did not concern him.

He painstakingly narrowed his eyes, lowering himself into a chair near the prosecution.

... Was he really the real deal?

Acting proxy to my doubt, Prosecutor Schaefer continued.

“The one here is undoubtedly Hal Anderson. From the results of the forensics and magic theory labs, that has been made clear without a doubt.”

“Hmm, that means... what does it mean?”

The judge shifted his gaze to the victim, next looking at the female prosecutor, and questioning her.

“As a result of analyzing DNA taken from Hal Anderson while he was alive, the forensics team have confirmed the samples were a match.”

Assistant Eugene distributed medical certificates from the forensics department. Accepting it, I read it from start to finish.

‘The genetic information taken from post-revived Hal Anderson, and the DNA collected from the portion of remains found on the scene, as well as the victim’s DNA conceded by the security company are all a perfect match.’

... The hell’s this?

It’s true, from what I could read on the medical certificate, the one sitting in the witness-exclusive chair was undoubtedly Hal Anderson.

But the hell’s this!? It’s not making any sense.

“How idiotic.”

I slammed the certificate on the desk, and objected.

“This is a trial for first degree murder. If he isn’t dead, we don’t even fulfill the actus reus of murder!”

“Idiotic?”

The female prosecutor scrunched her brow, glaring at me.

... Ah this is bad. It’s time for her counterattack.

“The actus reus of first degree murder has absolutely nothing to do with whether the victim is dead or not. The requirement is that the assailant killed the victim.”

“That’s just semantics! They’re the same thing!”

“No, they’re not,” Prosecutor Schafer continued on. “Shall I tell you my basis, Mr. Lawyer?”

“First, there are two precedents in Grimbeld’s court where where the assailant was convicted for murder when the victim was still alive.”

Prosecutor Schaefer looked at the judge.

“In the first one, the victim was resuscitated after the defendant received a death sentence. That one was precedent from seventy years ago, and it originated from a physician’s misrecognition back when our health care system was undeveloped, but by the authority of double jeopardy, the defendant was

prosecuted with capital punishment.”

... Bang. I hit the desk, collecting attention on myself before I refuted.

“You mean the verdict of the first hearing of the Lakeside Incident? Then the high court overturned that precedent. Infliction of bodily harm was adopted in the third hearing, and it’s not as if the defendant was convicted strictly for murder.”

Prosecutor Schaefer tilted her head. “Are you misunderstanding something?” she refuted.

“I said I had two precedents, right? I just explained an unfortunate event brought about by our undeveloped medical system. The problem is the second one, the Growout Murder Case six years ago.”

The judge furrowed his brow, making an unpleasant face.

“In the Growout Murder Case, the defendant received a guilty verdict, and was properly executed. But there was a single large problem with this case. While the victim’s mind was gone, his body was still alive. He was in a so-called brain-dead state.”

After a sharp glare at me, Prosecutor Schaefer spoke to the judge.

“Were you aware, m’lud?”

“Hmm, I still have a vivid recollection of that case.”

“The victim in the case suffered a deep cut into their brain, and the hospital declared them brain dead”

Prosecutor Schaefer spoke without even reading the document in her hands.

“From then on for the rest of her life, it was certain she... the victim would never recover consciousness, but the problem was that her body was still alive.”

The judge made a grim expression as he nodded. “It became famous at the time as a tragedy brought about by modern medicine.”

“Our current medical technology is at an exceedingly high level. Even if the brain was dead, it’s at a level where the body can still maintain life.”

...! I remembered Jessica’s state this morning.

With tubes connected to every part of her body, she was unable to live on her own power, kept alive by the machines.

“If you’re a lawyer, you should at least know the three signs of death, right?”

The female prosecutor asked me.

Three signs of death. Those were...

“Stopped heartbeat, stopped breath, failure of the pupil to reflect light... those are the three indicators to determine a person is dead, right?”

I answered with elementary knowledge from my criminal law class in school.

“Exactly. Grimbeld’s justice system once used these three criterion to distinguish the dead from the living. But brain death didn’t correspond with any of them.”

The prosecutor made an especially gloomy expression.

“Even if their breath air and their heart beats, if the brain dies, then they cannot hold conversation or laugh, or experience anger or sorrow. They can no longer do anything.”

... That’s why a murder charge was applied.

“The defendant of the Growout Case was charged for murder. It was this country’s first ever execution based on murder from brain death.”

... This flow isn’t good.

I know of the Growout Case’s precedent. We had to argue left and right about its result in our student days.

It was a troublesome point of our legal system. The greater the brutality of an incident, the more feelings there were that couldn’t be overturned with logic.

... But I’m an attorney. Even if I must speak ill of it coldheartedly, I have to object for the defendant’s sake.

“I do know of the Growout case. I don’t have any objections to using it as precedent. But this tim’s case is clearly different. The brain of the victim over there seems to be functioning just fine.”

I pointed at the victim. He hadn’t uttered a single word, but for some reason,

that man with a leisurely look on his face grated on my nerves.

“Is he brain-dead? The forensics lab’s evaluation speaks of no such diagnosis.”

“I haven’t spoken of my third precedent yet.”

At the end of the end, Prosecutor Schaefer spoke with a decisive face strangely full of confidence as she looked down at me.

“This isn’t a very famous precedent, so it wouldn’t be strange if some of you didn’t know it.”

Prosecutor Schaefer crossed her arms, and continued.

“Around a week ago, a certain thief was indicted for the sin of larceny. But the culprit in this incident went and did quite a troublesome thing. He returned the stolen goods to the victim the next day.”

What Compared to the first and second case, this one seemed quite small in scale.

But that only made me anxious.

“Why did you do such a thing? The police asked, and the thief answered. When I took it to the pawn shop, they wouldn’t give a dime for it... he said. Understand? This thief returned the stolen goods because they held no value.”

... But that’s irrelevant, continued Prosecutor Schaefer in a cold tone.

“Whether it be a pebble on the side of the road, or junk that looks like nothing but trash, someone’s belongings are their property. If you take them, it’s larceny. It doesn’t matter if you return it or not. If an injured person’s wounds heal up, it’s no longer inflicting bodily harm? If you steal money and give it back, you get off scot free? If you take a person’s life, and they happen to come back, it’s not a problem?”

... Idiotic, said Prosecutor Schaefer to me.

“Whatever happens to the victim after that is something that doesn’t matter to the assailant, right? We’re here to blame you for the crimes you committed.”

... Don’t try and make it someone else’s fault, said the female prosecutor.

How to Prove Death

Prosecutor Schaefer continued on in a threatening voice. For a moment, the court was taken in by silence.

They had clearly been drawn into her atmosphere.

When I hadn't even done anything, for some reason, I sensed the entire court was looking to Prosecutor Schaefer as their superior.

... This is bad, at this rate, their impression of Claudia will worsen.

I have to object somehow. But how?

I thought some, and chanted my objection at the prosecution.

"Objection. Let's say for instance, by the precedent of the Lakeside and Growout incidents, it is possible to adapt murder charges if the deceased is revived. But there is one fatal contradiction between both cases and this one."

Or so I tried saying, but how shall I explain it.

Taking a breath, I thought. Looking to the side, I saw Claudia was still fixed on the victim.

... What was she so surprised about?

No, I guess her surprise was natural.

A person thought dead came back. No matter how you looked at it, that wasn't normal.

Right, it was normally unthinkable and now that he's here alive, it's doubtful he even died in the first place.

Right, that's the start of my counterattack.

"The Growout Incident's victim's death didn't fit the three signs of death, but brain-death was used as a basis for murder. The Lakeside Incident was the same. That one was due to a misdiagnosis, but it's because they mistakenly reported the three signs of death that murder was taken up in the first hearing."

I pointed at the victim.

“If you wish to say the victim over there died, then when, where, and why? Do you have a death certificate to prove it? If you don’t have a doctor’s diagnosis, then you can’t prove he ever died.”

... Bang! I hit the desk, pressured. And spoke. “He died and got better? Hah? Is that really so? Are you sure you didn’t just misdiagnose a living person as dead?”

I looked at the judge. He had always looked mildly inclined towards the prosecution’s side, but now it looked as if he didn’t know who was right. He stroked his long, white beard in anguish.

“Hmm, the defense’s objection is certainly sound. The death of a human becomes less defined the further medical science advances. If the victim did truly die, we’ll need the certificate to prove it.”

“I agree with m’lud’s opinion,” agreed Prosecutor Schaefer.

... And wait, that one was my opinion.

“It’s extremely difficult to prove a person’s death. Even if they’ve lost vital signs, if you say that they’re alive as long as there are living cells in their body, then death will cease to exist.”

... But I’m not trying to say anything too philosophic here, Prosecutor Schaefer continued on.

“The victim died. And came back. That isn’t the realm of the forensic department. It falls under magic theory. If science can’t prove it, then we shall prove it with the power of magic.”

“Hmm? Was there a doctor on the magic theory lab’s staff?”

On my statement, Prosecutor Schaefer said, “There is, didn’t you know?” with a smile full of leisure.

“Chief Researcher Samantha Warrick of the magic theory lab is an exceedingly diligent, prestigious physicians’ license toting doctor.”

She sent a sign to assistant Eugene beside her. There, surely prepared beforehand, he handed out some A4 printouts.

“This is the post-mortem certificate prepared by Dr. Samantha. A post-mortem certificate has just as much an ability to prove death as a death certificate does.”

T-this woman... she's too meticulous.

On her preparations too perfect, I felt like vomiting.

“I could give the explanation, but let us leave the explaining to the professionals. M'lud, we will now hear in what manner the victim died, and was revived by a doctor who took part in the autopsy.”

... Is that alright? Said Prosecutor Schaefer in a tone that didn't permit a no, dragging a yes out of the judge.

Witness Stand (1) Magic Theory Research

Lab Researcher

“Uwah... Mr. Lawyer, what’s with that person?”

Scrunching her forehead, Claudia’s hysteric voice wasn’t uncalled for. If I hadn’t known Samantha beforehand, I would have felt the same.

The prosecution side’s door opened, and the one who emerged was researcher of the magic theory lab, and the one in charge of the corpse’s autopsy in this case, Samantha Warrick.

“Whiiiish, whiiiish.”

Raising a creepy oxygen sound, she entered the court room, and stood at the witness stand.

The gallery certainly did act up when Claudia made her entrance, but this time’s clamor was clearly something different.

The courtroom sketch artists opened their mouths, and stopped their pens momentarily. Could we call the one before our eyes, the one standing on the witness stand a human, or an alien, or something else entirely?

“P-pp... Prosecutor Schaefer!”

The judge’s dignified white beard shook left and right as he demanded an explanation from the female prosecutor.

“What is the meaning of this!?”

... Yes, exactly. No, I had half-expected it, but for her to really do it... that’s actually praiseworthy.

On the witness stand was a mysterious woman with a large gas canister over her back. No, by appearance alone, it would be difficult to determine she was female, so perhaps there were people out there who thought this alien was male.

As should be expected, Samantha had changed out the clothes she had been

wearing yesterday. As if it were made to operate outside a high-tech space ship, she wore white protective clothing.

That figure without the slightest exposed skin was truly an alien. The black tube extending from the gas cylinder on her back linked to a device attached to her face, and I'm sure it was pumping oxygen there.

Right in the center of that spherical white helmet was a transparent, rectangular glass screen, and from it, she could barely make out the situation outside.

... Huh, how are we supposed to talk like this?

It was such a bizarre scene, that my own levelheadedness was my greatest mystery.

"She..."

For some reason, Prosecutor Schaefer made a discouraged expression. That protective armor likely wasn't by Cate's will. Whenever things didn't go her way, she'd immediately start sulking, so it was easy to tell.

"This is chief researcher Samantha of the magic theory lab. She um, has a chronic... illness of sorts? Without her gas canister, she can't go outside."

Chk, click. When I thought I heard some strange mechanical sound, I noticed Samantha place something on top of the table in front of the witness stand.

That's... a speaker?

Psssh, whiiiiin, chk, chk... the speaker made some incomprehensible sounds. And, "Testing, testing, one two three."

Just as I'd heard yesterday, it was Samantha's hoarse voice. The sound quality was actually quite high.

"Ah, ahem. M'lud, this is just medical equipment. It's something like a pace maker, so please don't pay it any mind."

"I... see..."

... So that's how it is. Truly the times have changed. The judge opened his eyes wide in surprise, as he decided to accept her odd attire.

No, you can't just accept it, there's something off here. I had a mountain of retorts, but it was largely irrelevant to the case at hand, so I forcefully pushed down the words coming out of my throat, and prepared to hear out her testimony.

"U-um, Mr. Lawyer."

My shoulder was poked. Turning, I found that Claudia had moved herself closer to me. She made a serious face as she spoke. "It's the first time I've ever seen an alien."

"... That's no alien. That's a pervert."

"Perwort? Is that some kind of plant?"

... Someone teach this woman some common sense.

Witness Stand (2) Magic Theory Research

Lab Researcher

“It means she’s a strange person.”

I quietly whispered to Claudia. Perhaps catching sight of that, the judge gave an, “Ahem,” clearing his throat before saying, “Defense, please refrain from whispering in court.”

... I made him mad.

“Um, well, I’m sorry.”

Claudia tried shrinking her shoulders as she fidgeted and apologized, but I just let out a deep sigh.

That wasn’t the problem. Right now, what I had to concentrate on was that fully armored Samantha Warrick on the witness stand.

“M’lud. Let us hear testimony from Mrs. Samantha about the means through which the victim was revived.”

Prosecutor Schaefer lightly rubbed her temple. Was she containing her laughter, or was she irritated at Samantha’s odd attire, I was hesitant to decide.

“Hmm, then witness, please give your testimony.”

Samantha who’d been standing in silence flipped the switch on the speaker in front of the stand. For a moment, a metallic Kwwwiin rang out, but it immediately faded away.

“Ah, ahem. Hmm. Roger roger. Can you properly hear my voice?”

“ ... ”

“Um, m’lud?”

“Y-yes? Me?”

No matter how strange she looked, wasn’t he just a little bit too distracted? The moment Samantha called out to the judge on her speaker, his body

suddenly shook, and his eyes opened wide.

“Ah, no, I just wanted to know if my voice was getting through properly...”

“O-oh, let’s see. Yes, there is no problem. Then witness, please give your testimony.”

“... Yes.”

Because of her full face mask, I couldn’t catch her expression, but for some reason, she looked terribly depressed to me.

“First, about the victim Hal Anderson.”

I could hear a rustling sound from inside her protective gear. Perhaps she was reading documents inside of that. Somehow.

“His revival wasn’t the result of any medical apparatus. He was brought back from death by the power of magic.”

“I see. But as far as I know...” the judge fiddled with his white beard as if trying to remember something as he spoke. “I didn’t think there were any magicians alive who could bring back the dead... am I wrong?”

“No, your memory isn’t mistaken.”

Samantha continued indifferently.

“At present, among the magicians that exist throughout the world, there exists not a single one with the power to revive the dead. That remains constant tracing a hundred years back through history, and there are no historic records of any magician succeeding in such a feat.”

However, Samantha added on.

“There does exist a magic tool that can do it. That would be Death’s Jewels.”

... Death’s Jewels? As I recall...

I revived my memory of my investigations in the library.

In the world war fifty years ago, the Commonwealth of Sodom was invaded. At the time, three national treasures were stolen. The Godragon’s Sword, the Goddess’ Raiment, and...

“A national treasure of Sadom lost in the war fifty years ago, Death’s Jewels. The magic tool that was said to have been made by an ancient magician has an effect of reviving the dead.”

... The victim used it, and came back to life, or so Samantha testified.

Witness Stand (3) Death's Jewels

"It was one of the charms passed down in my house for generations."

For a moment, I wondered who had spoken. There was a ruckus breaking out in the gallery, as I looked left and right.

But one person, Claudia alone was looking straight at the prosecution seats. As I followed her blue eyes to look that way, I found the victim in the witness-dedicated seat had moved to stand over by the prosecution.

... What's this?

Prosecutor Schaefer who'd just been loitering around with composure looked like she couldn't calm down. Her forehead furrowed, and she sent a frustrated sidelong glance at the witness.

Caring not for that female prosecutor, the victim Hal Anderson continued in courteous and slow words.

"I do not know how or when that jewel came into our household. But it was something precious, so I always had to carry it on my person. That's what I was taught as a child, and that was how I was raised."

... I would never have imagined it was something stolen by the demon lord, said Hal Anderson with a bearing as if he was surprised from the depths of his heart.

He hadn't said anything strange. He was a magi, and so was the demon lord. That's how the story goes. Either his distant relative just happened to be the demon lord, or someone close to him, and from that flow, the jewel stolen in the Great War just so happened to come into Hal Anderson's hands.

That's how you should take it. That was the conclusion I could feel his words were implying.

... What's that, how shameless.

It's not logically wrong. But for some reason, this man's words held something, some inconsistency.

And I recalled the crystal ball tucked away in my bag.

This morning, I had looked up Death's Jewel again. And I had noticed.

The orbs obtained in the Dark Forest were, no matter how you looked at them, Death's Jewels themselves.

... What on earth did it mean?

At first, I thought it a coincidence. But when the dead pop up, the story changes.

I couldn't hold down the feeling it was all too well put together. The crystal balls we just happened to find in those black woods were one of the national treasures lost in the world, and a person who used it to revive was right now the victim standing by the prosecution's side.

Just what sort of connection would lead to this result?

... Coincidence, there's no way. Did everything happen because it was supposed to happen?

"Is that everything you have to say?"

I didn't say anything. So Prosecutor Schaefer's words were likely intended for Hal Anderson standing beside her.

"Yes, because of you, I got to say everything I wanted to."

"Oh, then that's nice. Then could you quietly return to the witness seats?"

Her words were polite, but her phrasing had thorns. Hal formed a smile on his lips, "Oh, my apologies. I'll step down at once," he said as he moved to the witness seat with especially comfortable movements.

It wasn't just a smile I could see on his mouth. In its corner, his sharp canine felt a little menacing.

Samantha was currently on the witness stand. But even if she wasn't there, would this man have simply said those words on the stand?

... I get the feeling that's wrong. That guy wanted to give testimony while standing on the prosecution's side.

I don't have a basis, but for some reason, that felt like an absolute truth to

me.

“Death’s Jewels...”

A hoarse voice broke through the tense air wrapping around the court. Samantha continued her testimony through the speaker.

“There are said to be three in total. Each one lets you revive one dead person one.”

“Oh? Wait a second.”

I posed her a question.

“Why do you know that? If I may be so rude, Death’s Jewels are an article close to a legend, are they not? Even if such a thing existed, you cannot expect us to simply nod and agree with it.”

Samantha touched the touch panel display on top of the stand. When I wondered what she was operating, the defense side’s display system started up, and a single screen depicted an old-fashioned text.

“What’s being displayed at present was preserved in Sadom’s national library, an official and original text detailing Death’s Jewels.”

I looked at the bottom of the text. It was definitely the lettering system of the Commonwealth of Sadom.

“The text says this. Deaths Jewel activates the moment its user dies, reviving them as they were born.”

... As they were born? Ah, you mean naked...

No, that’s not it, I thought as I looked over the victim’s body.

In that last trial, Prosecutor Schaefer stated they found a portion of the corpse.

Thinking back on it now, she was likely referring to this situation. Not the whole corpse, but a portion of it. Meaning the individual was not at the scene.

But part of his was. A single arm remained.

And right now, Hal Anderson was sitting contently with all his limbs intact.

... Perhaps as he was born meant it fully restored his body.

On a different tangent from my thoughts, Samantha went on.

“In order to demonstrate its effect, a jewel must be on the subject’s body at the time of death. You cannot just possess it, it must be in direct contact with the body.”

Then when the victim died, he had Death’s Jewel on him?

“And this is the most important part, once Death’s Jewel is used, it will be destroyed, and can never be used again.”

“What sort of state would destroyed imply?”

“The literal state.”

Samantha turned my way. But because of her mask, I couldn’t really determine if she was looking at me.

“As stated in these texts, Death’s Jewel has the effect of reviving dead lifeforms.”

... And, continued the fully armored magic theory lab researcher.

“Remnants of the destroyed Death’s Jewel were found on the scene. As a result of analyzing the magic particle pattern it gave off, we concluded that jewel had an effect of bringing people back from the dead.”

“Is there any doubt about it?”

Prosecutor Schaefer asked in a cool voice.

“There is no doubt.”

Samantha replied without a point of hesitation, making the gallery’s ruckus reach its peak.

... Whap! The judge’s gavel ended the noise, letting a brief silence take over.

“It can revive the dead. To think such a thing was possible... the world of magic is a deep one indeed.”

The judge raised a moving voice. “However,” he added on.

“This is a court, and not a laboratory. Exactly what happened on the day of the incident, this is a place to pursue that truth. Witness, please continue your testimony.”

“I see. But... I’ve already said everything I wanted to say...”

“That’s not true, right?”

The one to interrupt Samantha’s words was Prosecutor Schaefer.

“There’s still more .If you don’t say the important things, it’ll never get across.”

“O-oh, right. Let me tell you the results of our magic parsing. There was a remnant of magic left on the Death’s Jewel found at the scene, and from analyzing the magic particle pattern it gave of and comparing it to the unknown magic particle pattern we extracted from the victim’s bloodstream...”

... The patterns matched. There is no doubt this subject used Death’s Jewel to come back to life. She said it clearly for every person in court to hear.

Witness Stand (4) The Victim

... Psss. Psss.

The gallery was noisy. Their whispering voices resounded through the courtroom.

... This is bad.

Magic parsing. It was more troublesome than I could have imagined.

A jewel that can revive the dead. And a victim revived by it.

This was unprecedented. Never heard anything like that. Having the dead come back to life is a historic revelation. Normally, we'd be looking into it deeper.

If this were a laboratory, and I a scientist, that would be the proper response. But this was a court, I was an attorney, that was a prosecutor, and Claudia was here not as an experimental subject, but a defendant in a murder case.

... When I thought I could crumble that.

But why at this point? If they had such a perfect witness, why didn't that call him in last time's trial?

If there was something that caught me, it was that.

... No, that's wrong. That isn't it. Cate did try calling him to court. But he declined.

Under this country's rules, informal witnesses had a right to decline. No matter how much the court requested their testimony, you couldn't force them up. If they declined, that was the end of it, they had no obligation.

The reason we were able to get him here today was because the judge had given a summons. With a summons out, the witness had no right to refuse. It was precisely because of that legally binding subpoena that we could call him in.

Hal Anderson didn't want to show his face in court. That's why he was absent

last time.

... Then what? What of it?

When I tried answering my own question, I caught myself in my own trap.

I don't know anything.

"Um, Mr. Lawyer."

Timidly, Claudia called over to me.

"What is it?"

"There's something I don't get."

"... Is it related to the case?"

"I don't know. But it won't leave my mind."

... I wonder what it is? Said Claudia as she scrunched her brow, and pointed at Cal Anderson with an earnest look on her face.

"That person reminds me of father."

"What?"

... What are you saying at a time like this?

Whap, a grand gavel rang out, and the judge spoke.

"I understand that the defendant has been revived with magic. It's hard to believe, but now that it's happened, there can be no helping it. To think we would deliberate a murder case with the victim still alive..."

Letting out a deep sigh, he continued.

"But now that he's here alive, we cannot go about not listening to his story. Next witness to the stand."

Samantha backed down, taking a seat on the waiting seat. In her place, Hal Anderson stood, and climbed up to the stand.

"Very well, witness. Your name and occupation."

"Hal Anderson. My occupation... I'm a security guard."

... No, perhaps I should say, 'was'? The company is treating it as if I'm dead,

Hal Anderson threw in an out-of-place statement.

“It matters not. Then witness, please sign this written oath, and place your print on it.”

Hal Anderson signed then form on the witness stand with the pen beside it, before pushing down his thumb into the red ink pad, and affixing it as a seal.

The bailiff picked up the written oath. He handed it to the judge. The judge carefully read it from top to bottom.

“... Hmm, very well. Then witness, please start your testimony.”

“Even if you say testimony, what do you want me to start with?”

“Just tell us what happened on the day of the crime.”

Prosecutor Schaefer sounded somewhat irritated. Did she dislike the guy?

“Ah, the day of the incident. Well, let’s see. As I recall, I did more guard work than usual that day. Even if I look like this, I like to think myself an earnest one, and I’ve never skipped a day in my life.”

“No one asked. Get to the point.”

Said Prosecutor Schaefer, tapping her fingers against the desk in irritation.

“Ah, my apologies. Then let’s see, the day of the incident, the day of the incident... I did the same work as always that day. Exactly by the manual. And that night, I went to do my rounds on the roof-as was written in the manual-and I was attacked.”

... By that woman, or so Hal Anderson pointed Claudia out.

Witness Stand (4) Baffling Logic

“She is the culprit, there is no doubt about it.”

For a moment, the court was wrapped in silence. No one let out a word, attention merely gathering at the defendant on the witness stand, and Claudia who he called out.

“Is there any mistake?”

Prosecutor Schaefer emphasized. There, Hal Anderson declared, “I definitely saw her with these eyes of mine. There is no mistake.”

“I can still remember it clearly. When I went to look around the roof, the one who suddenly slashed me from behind was undoubtedly that woman.”

“W-wait a second.”

I tried to object. What words would come out next? The gallery without saying, the defendant Claudia, the prosecution, the victim and the judge were eagerly waiting.

“T-the defendant... defendant... testified she headed to the scene not on the 11th, but the 10th.”

“And?”

The female prosecutor was awfully calm.

“What of it? If that’s the case, it’s already been resolved, hasn’t it? That defendant gave false testimony. Or perhaps she’s just mistaken? At this point, the 10th and 11th are already a month passed. There’s nothing strange with making an error of a day.”

“H-however! You haven’t explained any of the contradictions in the security camera footage!”

I desperately refuted. But some part of my heart had noticed it was futile resistance.

“There was a contradiction between the footage of the defendant attacking

the victim, and the footage of the park that was supposedly shot simultaneously!”

“Ah, you mean the snow. If that’s the case, I said it at the start. The snow piled on the roof was removed by the victim. How about it, witness?”

On Prosecutor Schaefer’s urging, Hal Anderson answered.

“You mean the snow built up on the roof? If that’s what it is, I went and cleaned it. Even if the hotel was on break, the viewing platform was open to the public. It would be dangerous if I just left it like that.”

“He says.”

Prosecutor Schaefer looked at me. Her look without any emotion in it was inorganic, yet condescending.

“But, but that’s...”

... What’s this?

I can’t object at all.

I investigated all I could about the case. I learned so much. I unearthed so many new truths. But each and every one of them didn’t constitute evidence capable of breaking these deadlocks.

A single one. A single witness came out. That’s all it was, yet everything had completely turned around.

Claudia appeared on the hotel roof on November 10th, tempted by someone of identity unknown, believing some stranger she’s never met in her life to be the demon lord, and attacked him.

Every part of that was definitely something you had to blame her for. While she may have had circumstance, if you sin you have to receive the appropriate punishment.

But with the lid held open, nothing meshed anymore. It was simply too absurd for me to say anything. When he was attacked on the 10th, before I knew it, it was being made out he was murdered on the 11th, and evidence to support it was popping out one after the next.

On top of all that, the friggin' victim even came out.

Death's Jewel, and reviving people and magic, at this point such things were reduced to trivial matters.

I believe the defendant. I do, but before this overwhelming logic, there was nothing to be done.

"... Mr. Lawyer."

I heard Claudia's voice. Perhaps she had been calling me a number of times.

"What's going to happen to me now?"

"..."

"Did I kill someone after all?"

"You don't know?"

"I don't."

But she continued.

"If I really did kill, I'll make up for my sins. At that time, could you be there to defend me?"

After saying only that, her blue eyes were cast down, and she would say no more.

... If she really killed someone.

"Defense? What seems to be the matter?"

The judge was waiting. Was I going to object, or accept this testimony, it was the judge's job to hear out my choice.

But I couldn't find the next words.

"..."

"If you don't have any objections, the witness' testimony shall be accepted. Is that acceptable?"

Object. Object. Object. Object. This is the important part.

Should I accept it?

This girl doesn't know anything. Raised not knowing anything. No one taught her the world's common sense, with nothing but biased knowledge pushed onto her, she was taught that was the absolute one and only truth, and she lived by it.

And she put it to practice.

Claudia attacked someone. Whatever motives she had, it was a crime.

There's no doubt she attacked him. The security camera feed proves it.

Right. That's right, why had I overlooked such a simple thing?

"I was mistaken."

"Eh?"

"Claudia. You definitely did attack someone. Attacking some random stranger from behind is definitely not the actions of a hero. Isn't that a bit cowardly?"

"W-what's this, all of a sudden?"

Claudia looked at me with deep concern. It seems she thought I had finally lost it.

... I'm not joking.

"M'lud, the defense objects to that current testimony."

"Oh. You do? Truly, the testimony up to now has been nothing but incomprehensible things, but I do think it follows a certain thread of logic."

I shook my head, and denied it.

"That isn't true. Regardless of whether the victim had something like Death Jewel, regardless of whether or not the dead can come back to life, regardless of what weirdos show up in court, the impossible remains impossible, and that which won't happen simply won't happen."

"Then let's hear it."

She had been so quiet up to now I was getting suspicious. Prosecutor Schaefer finally opened her mouth, and scowled at me.

"What are you basing that objection of yours on?"

“That’s...”

I resolved myself. And after taking a momentary glance at Claudia, I opened my mouth.

The Defense's Plea of Innocent

"The defense renews its plea."

I resolved myself. When I've come this far, I'll do it to the end.

"The defendant is not guilty. She hasn't killed anyone."

"Oh my? Oh my oh my, oh my oh my? You sure you should say something like that, your unsound mind shtick won't get through any more, you know? It's not my fault if those words turn to cut you and make you bury your head in the sand, Mr. Lawyer."

"I'm not the one who should be burying their head. That would be you, Ms. Prosecutor."

Her face of full confidence stiffened as she looked at me.

"Hmm, it's true I feel that plea is a little pushing it come so far, but..." The judge stroked his beard, making a strained expression

"If you'll say that much, I must ask your basis. What foundation do you have that the defendant did not kill the victim?"

"It's simple. The victim's right there. That alone is irrefutable evidence that the defendant did not murder the victim."

For a moment, silence descended on the court. For a while, no one opened their mouths, not a single sound sounding out. The one to break the silence was...

"Weren't you listening at all?"

As expected, Prosecutor Schaefer.

"That victim used Death's Jewel to come back. Even if he's revived, as long as he's been killed, the crime of murder holds. We just spent a good portion of our time discussion it, right?"

"Yes, I've no intent to stick in any doubt about that."

I pointed at the victim.

“That victim died once, and there’s no doubt he came back.”

“Hmmm, then as one would expect, even if he came back, that would mean the defendant did in fact kill someone, wouldn’t it?”

On the judge’s question, I shook my head to deny it.

“No, it does not. The reason being the victim’s death and revival fall into a completely different timeslot from the defendant’s assault.”

... A different timeslot, you say?

The judge opened his eyes wide. There were similar reactions from the gallery, and a rabbling noisy atmosphere was winding out.

... Bang. An intense ghastly sound. Prosecutor Schaefer slammed the desk.

With that sound as the signal, silence descended on the court. The master who’d created the silence spoke with a piercing cold voice. “... Keep your bluffs in moderation, Daniel.”

“It’s fine to demonstrate a possibility, but if you don’t have the foundation to support it, it’s nothing but an empty theory, nothing but a bluff. Do you understand that, Mr. Lawyer?”

“If it’s a foundation, I have one.”

In a thorough attempt to make fun of my opponent, I sent the prosecution a smile.

“In the prosecution’s opening statement last trial, it was clearly asserted. The portion of remains found at the scene showed no vital reaction.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“... What’s that mean?”

There were some curious voices from the gallery. The judge was the same, and he furrowed his brow as he compared me and the prosecutor.

“Mr. Lawyer, Mr. Lawyer, what’s a vital reaction?”

Sitting in the dock, Claudia gave an expression showing she didn’t know what was going on, so I spoke in a small voice.

“A vital reaction is...” I looked over the whole court as I answered. “A reaction given off only by living beings. For example, respiration and suppuration, subcutaneous bleeding, they’re all bodily processes that can only occur if the human is alive. And in the previous trial, the prosecution asserted.”

... ‘There wasn’t a vital reaction from the severed portion. We believe it was severed post-mortem. The specific cause of death is yet unknown. We’re in the middle of investigations.’

“The prosecution definitely declared it. The corpse portion found in the park was severed post-mortem.”

I continued.

“You got that? Remember how the victim was resurrected. The victim used Death’s Jewel to come back to life. If Death’s Jewel revives its user the moment they die, then...”

... When exactly was the victim dead?

“Did he die when the defendant attacked him? Or was it in the middle of his fateful fall? They’re both wrong. The reason being, if he had died at that moment, the victim would have revived at that moment. If his arm was cut off once he was revived, it would be strange for it not to show any vital signs.”

“T-that’s...”

Prosecutor tried to say something, but nothing followed.

“There is no mistake in the results of the autopsy. If the defendant did murder the victim, the victim would have to have died during the assault, or during his fall. Otherwise, a post-mortem severed limb would never come up in the autopsy report. But if he died during his fall, that raises the question. Why didn’t Death’s Jewel activate? The answer is simple. The victim didn’t die.”

“W-why? Then why were those remains at the scene!?”

Prosecutor Schaefer’s face was red as she cried out.

“It’s nothing difficult. The person the defendant attacked, and the person who actually fell were different people. If that’s the case, it all starts to fit.”

“D-don’t say such nonsense! You’re the one speaking impossibilities!”

The gallery grew rowdy. Of course. I was saying a different person died, of all things. The judge alone was taking my words into careful consideration, closing both his eyes, and making an expression of deep thought.

“But if that’s the case, there’s something I don’t understand.”

He moved his tufty white beard as he presented his question.

“The victim didn’t die. It’s something hard to believe all of a sudden, but from what we can see in the autopsy report, it’s unthinkable that the defendant used Death’s Jewel after the attack. In that case, when was the defendant revived? Based on the results of magic parsing, there is no doubt he came back from the dead...”

“I don’t have any definite evidence. But I do have an idea.”

From the female prosecutor, I turned to the victim, Hal Anderson.

“There is no doubt the victim is a magi, correct?”

“Yes, there’s no doubt about it.”

Hal Anderson said it with an especially leisurely expression.

“A means to revive the dead, Death’s Jewel. This was a national treasure stolen by the demon lord during the Great War. Fifty years ago, the demon lord was struck down by the hero, and died. This is an undoubted historic fact.”

... This is just speculation, but... I added, as I look at the victim.

“Aren’t you the demon lord?”

“... It’s a fair cop.”

When it was such an outlandish question, Hal Anderson, no the demon lord easily admitted it with an audacious attitude.

About the Country Called Grimbeld

“Fufufu, ahahahahaha, wahahahahahahahahah!”

The demon lord raised a grand laugh. Baring his canines, his attitude was one where he had broken into laughter after simple and innocent intrigue.

It was such a healthy and refreshing laugh, a mysterious incomprehensible air spread across the courtroom

“Ahahaha...”

The demon lord lowered his face, grandly waving his right arm as he continued to hit against his knee in laughter.

“What’s so funny?”

I scowled at the demon lord. There, the laughter came to a sudden stop, and with leisurely motions, the demon lord raised his head to look at me.

“It’s not funny. It’s amusing,” he raised the corners of his mouth, letting out a voice like a whisper.

“The truth is, I’ve never lost before in my life. In fights, or games, or sports or studies. In every possible field, I was number one.”

... I’m perfect, said the demon lord.

“They always say if one sibling’s no good, the other’s a genius. I was often called a prodigy.”

... What’s he talking about?

If what he say is true, it was a historic new truth about the war. Thought I seriously could care less.

“Yet what’s with you.”

He stood from his seat. I could hear the sound of his footsteps as he took a few steps towards me. Eventually, leaning over the witness stand, he spoke.

“A mere lawyer? A third rate in it for the money. So why is someone like you opposing me? Naturally, someone of your level shouldn’t go about standing in

the way of my life.”

... Whap! The gavel sounded out, and the judge spoke. “Witness, keep your theatrics in moderation.”

It was somewhat mismatched. There’s no doubt he was a witness, but before being a witness, the one grinning triumphantly before us was first and foremost, the demon lord.

... No, that’s wrong. He’s just a witness after all.

“There are loads of them.”

“Ah?”

The demon lord recalled his grin. I continued.

“You didn’t fight this country fifty years ago, right? Then it’s only natural you don’t know. There are loads of things far stronger than you in these lands. When you don’t even know the world, don’t be talking so high and mighty, fool.”

The boisterous court went silent for that moment alone. No one said a word as the quietly listened to mine.

The gallery, the judge, Claudia, the prosecution, even the demon lord wouldn’t open his mouth. So for that moment, it felt as if time had stopped.

But as expected, the first person to break the silence was the demon lord after all.

“Ah, so I see. Then shall we have a contest to see who’s stronger?”

He had been expressionless for a bit, but his usual triumphant face had returned.

... No, it was a boorish face, it I really had to say.

“Why do you think I accepted it?”

“What?”

On the sudden question, my head went white.

“Why did I go out of my way to break my fifty years of silence, coming all the

way here only to admit to the fact that I am the demon lord?”

“That’s...”

Come to think of it, why? In the first place, I didn’t have a basis to conclude he was the demon lord in the first place. I just inferred from the situation, and asked if he was the demon lord or not. That’s all there was to it.

I hadn’t a shred of evidence. It was all vague conjecture, and nothing certain.

So if he wanted to refute it, he could’ve done it however he wanted. Yet this man expressly admitted he was the demon lord.

... It’s as if...

“Because it won’t trouble you, right?”

Prosecutor Schaefer spoke as if seeing through my heart.

“Fifty years ago, our country did not take part in the war. This was the result of a decision in accordance with the principle this nation’s constitution was written under, and nothing has changed since then. From times long gone by, our country has never intervened in any sort of conflicts, and we don’t side with anyone. Our constant neutrality is in itself Grimbeld’s standing within the international community.”

“Hmm, that’s why our country is the sole non-signatory of the allied nations, and among all the nations of the world, the length we’ve spent without war against another nation is longer than any other... is that related to this case?”

I answered the judge’s question. “It fits right in, m’lud.”

“Grimbeld did not take part in the war fifty years ago. Meaning we have no right to try the demon lord for his war crimes during it.”

“Exactly, my good people.”

The demon lord continued with a grand attitude.

“I’m the demon lord? And what of it? You all didn’t join in the war, did you? Then that’s no good. You have no qualifications to take me to an international trial, my good fools.”

... That’s why it’s so amusing, he said.

“B-but now that we know you’re the demon lord, that’s irrelevant. As long as a country of the alliance prosecutes you, the international court will be opened at once.”

“And how?”

The demon lord asked.

“Oy, oy, while I was working as a guard, I properly did my homework on your country’s system of law. You haven’t tied any treaties to hand over foreign criminals, have you? Then you won’t be able to hand me over. At present, you have no laws that allow you to restrain me. No one here can judge me.”

... Because I’m being protected by the laws of Grimbeld, chanted the demon lord in a thick voice that resounded well through the air.

... This, this, this bastard.

Bang! I slammed the desk before I had even realized it.

This man knew it would come to this.

How peculiar. Every part of it was peculiar. In this country without any ties or relation to the Great War, did this crime of heroes and demon lords and all other sorts of incomprehensible things happen? It was too peculiar.

But now it finally hit me.

This man planned to abuse it from the start. He had explicitly come here to waste all this country’s long years of effort on his evil deeds.

Go step on a Lego, this is getting to my head.

... Then there’s no meaning to it at all!

Whether he’s the demon lord or not means nothing. As long as he was in this country, this man was no demon lord. He was just a witness.

... What can I do?

“Ahahahahaha, hah. Then now that you all know who I am, let’s get on with the testimony.”

The demon lord stood at the stand.

“The trial isn’t done yet. Let me tell that little girl over there her precious truth.”

His eyes with a fiery glint, the demon lord made a grin across his face.

Claudia quietly sat in her seat. But her expression wasn’t calm, it looked as if she was terribly afraid and surprised to me.

Witness Stand (1) The Truth is?

“The truth?”

“That’s right. At that time, at that place, what exactly happened? I’m saying I’ll present you the truthful reality”

To the demon lord who made a broad grin as if he were belittling everyone, the prosecutor reacted. “... You really are a pain, you know that?”

... It seems she was irritated.

“Hahaha, don’t be like that, Ms. Prosecutor. I do feel sorry for doing the police’s work for them, but as long as I’m standing in a court of law, I can’t tell a lie. I’ve got to say the truth.”

He sure says it shamelessly.

... Whap! The gavel sounded, and the judge spoke. “Hmm, then shall we hear out your testimony?”

“It’s not as if I’m going to say anything particularly complicated.”

The demon lord’s expression tightened, letting his eyes glitter as he testified.

“It’s true I died and revived once before. But that wasn’t last month. It’s a tale of fifty years ago. I don’t have Death’s Jewel or anything like that with me now. So revival is impossible, and if I suffer a fatal wound, perhaps I’ll die.”

... Though my body’s always been close to invulnerable, the demon lord grumbled.

“When I revived, I’d lost a majority of power I had in my previous life. Well, even so, I’m still capable of killing everyone present here, mind you. But why don’t I do that? The truth is I’m quite content with my current lifestyle.”

“We don’t need your speech.”

I killed my emotions, and let out a voice as level as possible.

“I could care less about a demon lord’s private life. Won’t you keep it to whatever’s relevant to the case?”

“Oh, my apologies. Ever since my revival, I’ve never had an opportunity to divulge my truth to anyone, you see. I was so happy I ended up breaking into demon lord talk.”

With a witty tone, the demon lord went on.

“But I’d appreciate you don’t call it irrelevant. It’s relevant as anything. It’s just a pain to explain.”

“Hmm, how do you figure?”

When the judge made a gesture, the demon lord narrowed his eyes as he answered. “In the first place, who died?”

“I didn’t revive. In that case, who did the right arm at the scene belong to?”

“... Hnm?”

On the demon lord’s statement, the court froze over a moment. Claudia scrunched her brow, and put more power into the hand gripping her sword.

“Fifty years ago, I didn’t just steal one thing from the Commonwealth of Sodom. It was Death’s Jewels, the Goddess’ Raiment, and the Godragon’s Sword.”

... There nothing in the world the Godragon’s Sword can’t cut, said the demon lord.

“Any living thing in the world, that sword is capable of cutting it. Yet at the same time, there are only ever two thing in the world its blade can actually interact with. The master of the sword, and the foe they have determined their enemy. It can’t cut anything else.”

The demon lord pointed. At the end of his fingertip was the holy sword in Claudia’s hand.

“The identity of that sword is one of the national treasure I stole from the Commonwealth of Sodom, the Godragon’s Sword. My younger brother Roland Rheinland used that blade to kill me.”

“... What?”

I unintentionally raised a hysteric voice. But everyone in the court was the

same, wimply basking the demon lord in their blank stares from start to finish.

“Oy, oy, what’s with that reaction? I’m saying something quite important here.”

“W-wait a second.”

“What? If it’s a trifling question, I’ll kill you.”

“The hero was your brother?”

“That’s right. Did I fail to mention it?”

You sure did.

At the end of the grinning demon lord’s eyes was Claudia.

... The hero was the demon lord’s brother?

Then Claudia is... the demon lord’s relative?

Without a single blink, Claudia fixatedly observed the man. Not a tremor of her body, or a single word from her mouth. She silently listened.

“Good grief, it was just the worst. To think my little brother would betray me. He’d always been garbage without a scrap of talent in his body, but I never thought he’s be that foolish.”

... You think idiocy can be cured with death? The demon lord continued.

“I haven’t the slightest idea.”

The one to cut off his loquacity was Prosecutor Schaefer.

“You’ve been going yip yap yip yap for a while now. It’s my job, so I forced myself to put up with that unnerving voice of yours, but to be honest, I’m at my limit. We can’t keep your idle banter company any longer. I haven’t the slightest bit of interest in a demon lord’s tear-jerking soap opera.”

“Oy, oy, it’s not like I’m telling this story to get you all in a sentimental mood. But I may have kept the side show on for too long. Got it, I’ve got it, I’ll tell you. You listening? Then listen well. The truth is, fifty years ago when I died and revived, a bit of a small miracle happened. It was outside of my expectations.”

... Death’s Jewel revived me as I was born, the demon lord said as a preface.

“Fifty years ago, once I died, I was given life once more as if I was zero years of age. Ah, don’t worry, even if I was zero, I still had my memory and consciousness, so I was able to make it by myself. Slight as it may be, I could use a bit of magic. But that wasn’t the problem. I was surprised. Death’s Jewel properly activated, and revived me. But what surprised me more than anything was the other baby beside me.”

... I was revived, in the exact state I was born.

“We were twins. So when I died and was revived, I was reborn the same way, as twins. You get it? Why do you think the right arm found at the scene had the same DNA as me? The answer is simple. It’s because my identical little brother who had the same DNA as me was killed.”

... How unfortunate, little girl. The one you killed was your grandfather, said the demon lord to the hero.

Claudia raised a scream.

Witness Stand (2) Who Died?

“ ... ”

The court went silent. The eyes of the audience sitting in the gallery gathered on one place. The defendant's seat.

Claudia raised a cry that couldn't be called a voice, covering her head with both hands, messing up her pretty black hair as she caught a firm grip of it.

“No! That's wrong! The one I attacked was that man!”

Her arm lightly shaking, Claudia pointed at the demon lord.

“I saw it! At that time, I saw that face.”

“To be more precise, you saw the face of the hero who resembled me. We're twins. It's nothing strange for our faces to look alike.”

In contrast to Claudia's disarray, the demon lord spoke awfully calm.

“I-I would never make such a mistake! And, and...”

Claudia began plucking her hair as she desperately tried to make a protest. But no matter how she mulled over it in her head, she couldn't find her next words.

“If the one the defendant attacked on that day was not the demon lord but the hero, there is a single strange point.”

I came to Claudia's aid.

“The holy sword Blutgang she possess, well to be more precise, the Godragon Sword is a sword that has been verified to only be able to cut the demon lord.”

“R-right, that's right, Mr. Lawyer!”

Claudia showed an extremely calm, relieved expression. But the demon lord gave an undaunted smile, refuting without a moment's delay. “The one the holy sword can kill isn't just the demon lord, or rather, it isn't just me.”

“I just said it, didn't I? The Godragon's Sword is a double-edged blade that can only harm its master and whoever they want to kill. That sword chose the hero

as its master. It isn't just the demon lord. The truth is, it can kill the hero too."

... Hero, eh?

I tried asking.

"By hero, can I assume you mean the one who killed you in the world war, Roland Rheinland?"

"Yeah, and?"

"Why was the hero there? Even if it was a long time ago, you wanted to kill one another, right?"

For a moment, the demon lord's smile ceased. He became expressionless as he looked intently at me.

... What is it? It looked as if he was thinking over something.

"Even if we tried to kill one another, brothers are brothers. When I apologized and said I'd never do it again, he forgave me."

"If what you're saying is true, the hero really was a dunce."

Prosecutor Schaefer put in a sharp retort.

"Well I won't say you're wrong. Though I'm sure he had some thoughts of his own. For these fifty years, he kept me under his watch."

"Watch, is it?"

"Yeah, I'm sure he couldn't trust me from the depths of his heart. He kept watch over me around the clock to make sure I never did anything bad."

"Then he was at the scene in order to watch you?"

"That's right, or at least half right. The other half was to do his job."

Job? I put together my information on hand, and answered.

"Could it be the hero was a certain Andre McHirsh, who's been missing since last month?"

"Congratulations. We'd just gotten hands on a second life after all. We chose to change our names. To add onto that, my Hal Anderson is a name I made up when I acquired this country's nationality."

... I'm sure.

"Prosecutor Schaefer!"

I called over to Cate. Making an expression of reluctance from the depths of her heart, "What is it?" she answered as she folded her arms.

"Do you have a photo of Andre McHirsh?"

"... I have pictures of everyone related to the incident. Of course, I have one of Andre McHirsh as well."

"Hmm. Then shall we verify if their faces are similar or not?"

As the judge said that, her reluctant face did a complete turn, the prosecutor smiling as she replied, "Go right ahead."

... Really, what an easy-to-understand woman.

As she was fiddling with the machinery on the prosecutions' desk, Claudia in the defendant's seat approached me. "Um, Mr. Lawyer."

"For before, um... thank you."

I was about to reply something to her subdued and feeble voice, but on a call of, "The preparations are complete," from the prosecution, the words coming out of my throat were pushed back down.

On Prosecutor Schaefer's signal, the courtroom darkened for a moment. Eventually, the large air projection display started up in the center. At present, the screen showed nothing but a staticy sandstorm.

"Then first, let me bring up Hal Anderson's photo."

Alongside Prosecutor Schaefer's words, the picture of a single man, the demon lord standing at the witness stand came up.

The photo was from when he worked as a guard, with him staring straight at the camera in his uniform.

"Next, here's Andre McHirsh's photo."

The first picture slid over. In the right side display was Hal Anderson, and on the left, Andre McHirsh popped up.

Hal Anderson and Andre McHirsh's faces were... subtly similar.

It's true, the look in their eyes, that well-ordered nose, their mouths, the overall shape of their faces, it was somewhat reminiscent.

But in contrast to Hal Anderson's short hair, Andre McHirsh's grew to his shoulders.

On top of that, because Andre wore black-rimmed glasses with a relatively thick frame, the impression he gave off at a moment's glance was like that of a different individual.

"... What is the meaning of this?"

The judge furrowed his brow, emitting a serious voice.

"I do think these two individuals look alike. But I do believe it's a bit of a stretch to say they're so similar you'd mistake them..."

"Of course you do, m'lud. I mean, our hair styles are different. Change the hair around a bit, and voila, identical twins."

When his own claim was collapsing, the demon lord sounded awfully disconnected. It looked as if he enjoyed being in a pinch.

"I do not know this person!"

Claudia stood from the dock, her shoulders shaking as she spoke.

"The person I attacked had short hair, and he didn't wear glasses. I'm not mistaken!"

"We all know that already, brat."

The demon lord raised an overly indifferent voice. In that instant, Claudia slammed her open mouth shut, and didn't say any further.

"The defendant has a point."

Those were Prosecutor Schaefer's words. Hearing her unconcerned tone, I ended up muting myself on guard.

"It's true their facial structures are similar. But with so many different characteristics, I doubt she'd make a mistake. Then what if we do this?"

I had quite a bad feeling about this.

The prosecutor sent brisk instruction to Prosecutorial Assistant Eugene.

“Eugene, first, remove Andre McHirsh’s glasses.”

“Yes ma’am.”

Giving a mechanical response, the assistant touched the touch panel display, and processed something. And suddenly, the photo of Andre McHirsh floating in the air lost its glasses.

Without the glasses, his face became clearer, and its overall geometry became more distinct.

The female prosecutor continued on. “Next, shorten his hair.”

With practiced movements, the assistant swiftly altered the photo.

Eventually, Andre McHirsh had short hair. Seeing the photo, the audience in the gallery began acting up.

“Now then, we’ve taken away all the unnecessary thing. How about it girly? Do you have a recollection of this man?”

Claudia touched a hand to her mouth, looking up at Andre McHirsh’s face without blinking.

Eventually crumbling at the knees, she fell into the defendant’s seat. She offered but a short line, “Yes, this is the man I attacked.” It was the first time since the start of the trial that she accepted the charge.

Indictment

I felt as if I heard something snap. As her straightened back suddenly slumped forward, there was no vigor in Claudia's face.

It looked as if the tension she'd been building in the string keeping her up had finally snapped.

"Why?"

In a fleeting voice so small it would die out any moment, Claudia muttered.

"I only tried to kill the demon lord. Why did it come to this? Why, why, why..."

I couldn't bear to watch. The figure of a young girl's stout conduct was nowhere to be found.

Far from a hero, she was a mere girl on the verge of collapse.

"Now then, is that enough?"

Without taking a glance at Claudia, the demon lord on the stand spoke to the judge.

"We answered all the questions in the case, right? It was a complicated and convoluted case, but when you open the lid, it wasn't anything special. A crazy little brat got a crazy little notion in her head, and tragically attacked someone while playing hero of justice, but it was the wrong person. That's all there is to it."

The judge closed both his eyes, making a conflicted expression as he listened to the demon lord's words.

"How malicious. Thinking you're the most righteous person in the world, you have a terrible personality. It's best you learn that everyone has their own sense of values."

... Though it's already too late, the demon lord said as he raised a boorish laugh.

"Hmm. I sympathize with the defendant's unfortunate upbringing. But

whatever the reason it is no justification for murder.”

“It’s just as you say, m’lud.”

... What’s with this air?

When you take this historic truth into account, among everyone in this courtroom at present, the most sinful one in this room should be the demon lord himself.

For some reason, an atmosphere as if Claudia was the only bad guy was ruling the court.

It’s true we couldn’t judge the demon lord’s sins under this country’s laws. But something didn’t make sense.

... I didn’t know what it was, and I couldn’t put it to words. I’m a failure as a lawyer.

Is this the end?

Claudia had completely lost the will to fight. Her fatigue had surpassed its peak, as she blankly let off something close to resignation.

There were still mysteries left in this case. But were they really truths I wanted to uncover?

The more I prodded at the core of this case, the more Claudia was hurt. Is there any meaning behind pursuing these mysteries any further?

... Should it really... just end here?

My will to fight was waning. So Prosecutor Schaefer’s objection of, “Is that really so?” made me feel I’d been saved for a moment.

“If there’s no absolute right, then is the law truly necessary? Everyone has their own sense of values? And so what? An individual’s sense of values has no meaning within these halls.”

... The law is absolute, Prosecutor Schaefer boldly declared.

“I don’t like it, how you do things.”

“... I don’t really get what you’re trying to say. What are you on about all of a sudden?”

The demon lord sent the prosecutor an unpleasant glare.

“When I’m getting the defendant guilty for you, why is the prosecutor putting out her mouth? That’s not how a first-rate professional is supposed to work.”

“I became a prosecutor to thoroughly punish all criminals. If it’s for that sake, I don’t care what means I have to use.”

Backed by belief, she had an awfully high level of persuasive power.

“I don’t do this job because I want to help someone or make anyone happy, I’m a prosecutor to broil criminals, and lock them away. That defendant definitely did commit a sin. But you’ve broken it too, haven’t you? The law.”

Prosecutor Schaefer looked at me a moment, immediately returning her eyes to the demon lord. It was such a brief event I thought it was my imagination, but I definitely noticed it. Was that some sort of sign?

“Do you know just how much trouble I had to go through to drag you to court? It’s no joke. I’m not going to let you get away now.”

“Ah, I see. So that’s how it is.”

The demon lord looked as if he had found a satisfactory answer as he looked at the prosecutor.

... Could it be she doubted it from the start?

It’s true, by Cate’s conduct in the trial up to now, it was slightly, no it looked as if she was really pushing it. When she had the perfect evidence together, the seams were coming apart all over the place.

Even so, by continuing to push through her opinions, I ended up objecting, and as a result, we experienced a logical failure. It was the opposite conduct of she who always sought to win any and every trial.

Am I thinking too much? Or...

“You want to indict me for my sins, Ms. Prosecutor?”

Prosecutor Schaefer didn’t say anything. She silently glared at the demon lord.

“But in that case, this court would be the wrong place. Don’t you think so,

m'lud?"

"Who? Me?"

Suddenly called out, the judge looked confused for a moment, before immediately answering with the face of a professional.

"Hmm, it's true there is sense to the witness' claims. To the end, this court has been called to charge the defendant for murder, and not to press the witness for his sins."

"You're exactly right, m'lud. If you want to charge me for my sins, I'd like it if you started with arresting me, and then indicting me. This is a constitutional state. You have to follow the proper procedure, Ms Prosecutor."

... Of course, that's only if I've done something worth an arrest, the demon lord emphasized.

"... I will honor the law. So I'm not thinking to drag out your sins here."

The female prosecutor laughed scornfully.

"But that unconventional lawyer over there is a different story. It seems he has something, no quite a few things he'd like to object to this witness' testimony."

"Eh?"

I made a foolish face.

"It seems that lawyer... wants to object in his suspicion that you're actually the true culprit behind all of this."

"S-say what!?"

The judge opened his eyes wide, with an expression as if to say this was the first he'd ever heard of it. By the way, it was my first as well.

"W-what is the meaning of this, defense! Could it be you plan on indicting this man as the true culprit in this court?"

"Eh? Eh?"

... Wait a minute.

This is going all sorts of places.

“I will not doubt my belief that defendant is the real culprit, but it seems that the defense believes in his defendant, and trusts that she never committed murder. Of course, if he’s going to say any strange nonsense, It shall be seen through at once, but... this is a court. No matter how absurd his train of logic is, he is granted the opportunity to object.”

... So why don’t we hear it? The female prosecutor said to me, having the time of her life.

“Why do you think the defendant isn’t the culprit? While you’re at it, what’s your basis for thinking this witness is the true culprit?”

... This woman, god I hate her...

She set me up.

Before I had realized it, all eyes in the court had gathered on me. Curious eyes, hostile eyes, and from Claudia, eyes mingled with anxiety and hope.

Don’t look at me like that. In the first place, this is just a job I took up for the money.

If you look at me with those eyes... it’ll make me want to save you.

Do I really have no choice? But can I do it?

I looked back on the incident’s information up to now. Sure enough, there were multiple points where I could point out contradictions.

Sure enough, all the people who could answer my questions were gathered in this courtroom.

An expert in magic and science, a witness who knew and lived through the Great War. It’s a rare sight to come across a trial with both the hero and demon lord lined up.

... But what happens if I drag the truth out? Will it hurt her more?

I looked at Claudia. Her face was fleeting, and if I gave it any more stimulus, it looked as if it was going to shatter.

Will I break her or save her? It’s all or nothing.

If there's a possibility of saving her, should I bet on that?

I thought, and declared. "The defense... is prepared to indict the true culprit."

Monitering Room

“Hmm, I see... then let us hear the defense’s opinion.”

The judge pierced into me with an awfully sharp look. If I said anything wrong, I felt it would go right through me.

“ ...”

Let’s bring an end to this case. And protect the defendant, my client. For that, I either need to prove the defendant didn’t kill anyone, or indict a true culprit.

The confession, the evidence, and the eyewitness testimony together, at a glance, this situation was a dead end. But if you thought about it, there was a hole. It was...

“In the previous trial, a problem was presented. There were contradictions in the surveillance footage taken at the crime scene.”

“Ah, that again?”

Prosecutor Schaefer let out a deep sigh. From the sheer exaggeration of her motion, it made me feel she was actually giving a hint.

As I thought, was she leading me on?

“Wasn’t that already resolved? And at this point, it feels like a trivial problem with little relevance to this case. Bringing it up at this point means it must hold the key to resolve this case, right?”

She was clearly leading me on. But I thought I’d jump on anyways.

“The contradiction in the footage is a trivial problem? Perish the thought. More than that, this is the focal point of the case.”

I put up a bluff, wringing out a voice to roar through the courtroom.

“Are you listening? Remember what this demon lord... this witness just stated. The witness definitely said it. The one the defendant attacked wasn’t the witness-Hal Anderson-but the other guard, the hero Andre McHirsh.”

“And?”

The female prosecutor showed doubt.

“But that would be strange. The prosecution has asserted this photo was taken on November the 11th. If the defendant attacked the victim at the hotel on November 11th, the victim would not have been Andre McHirsh. By the shift table, the one who was on duty should have been Hal Anderson.”

The gallery started to grow noisy. “Come to think of it, he’s right.”

But the prosecution wasn’t particularly perturbed, objecting as if it were natural.

“In that case, wouldn’t that just have to mean she came to the scene on the 10th?”

“Eh?”

When she would never recognize it to that point, the prosecutor suddenly changed her hand, easily admitting it.

“What are you surprised about? The one who presented the possibility that the surveillance footage was taken on the 10th rather than the 11th was none other than the defense, right?”

“No, you’re right, but...”

“Right. Come to think of it, that sounds right. I’m sure the defendant came on the 10th. Oh? But how strange. By the shift table, the one on service on November 10th was a certain Andre McHirsh.”

... Huh?

I felt a cold sweat.

“She came to the hotel on November 10th. In that case, it wouldn’t really be a contradiction if she attacked Andre McHirsh, right?”

“Ah... crap.”

I accidentally let that out.

Claudia sent a worried look at me.

Was it a mistake after all? Was it pointless to pursue the truth any further?

... No, that's wrong. It's true I've been placed at a disadvantageous standing, but I should be growing nearer to the truth.

The problem is how to tie the demon lord to the true culprit. That was the beginning.

After a deep breath, I cooled my head and thought. There, a single doubt was born.

"Then why would such a problem have arisen?"

"Yes?"

The female prosecutor's eyebrow twitched in response, forming a dubious face.

"Fabricating evidence is a crime. Of course, with the numerous contraptions set up with the camera footage, they were goods even the police would never be able to fabricate."

That was proven in the previous trial. The camera footage had a special defensive magic on it, so you couldn't alter any of its contents. Aside from the date.

"Once the camera stores to a CD, its contents can never be changed. However, the date is an exception, and if it just goes by the date written on the case, all sorts of fabrications are possible. Then just who had done such a thing?"

"We didn't do anything of the sort."

Prosecutor Schaefer objected without a moment's delay.

"I know. But there's something I must ask. How did the police obtain these CDs in the first place?"

On my assertion, the court went silent for a moment.

"The security camera footage was stored on the monitoring room above the guard room. To enter this monitoring room, you have to clear its biometric systems. The only one who can enter the room is the security guard on duty for the day, and on their off days, they're set so even registered guards can't get in."

“Hmm, they were guarded that heavily?”

The judge’s eyes blinked as he responded.

“But no matter how complicated the system is, as long as the security company disarms it, then can’t just about anyone enter?”

“Yes. As m’lud has stated, no matter how sturdy the lock is, if the one in charge of managing it disarms it, it holds no meaning. With the police’s level of authority, getting a security company to disarm its system would be no trouble at all. But was there really any need for you to go through that troublesome paperwork?”

I looked at the female prosecutor, and glared at the demon lord.

“After the incident came to light, the police arrested the defendant in barely any time at all. As if all the investigators already knew her face. No matter how much authority they have, I get the feeling their movements are a bit too quick. So how did it really go down, Ms. Prosecutor? How did you obtain the defendant’s face, no her footage?”

“... Authority, authority, how noisy. It’s as if you’re treating us as some evil secret society. Very well, it’s not as if we were hiding it, so I’ll tell you. The police cooperated with the security guard on the site, and confiscated the CD.”

“I see. And that guard on the side would naturally mean you, wouldn’t it Mr. Demon Lord?”

The demon lord’s cold expression turned to a boorish grin for a moment before, “Yeah, that’s right,” he answered.

The System's Blind Spot

"It's true, I cooperated with the investigation."

The demon lord sure was laid back. Without any panic or unrest. As if it were only natural, "I mean, that's the obligation of a citizen, right?" he replied.

"It's true I wasn't always a person of this country, but right now, I have a proper citizenship; I'm a citizen of Grimbeld. I properly pay my taxes. What complaints do you have for me cooperating with the police who work day after day to maintain the peace?"

"Says you."

Prosecutor Schaefer muttered bitterly, but without paying it any mind, the demon lord went on.

"I handed the security camera footage to the investigators. What are you implying? Was assisting the police a crime?"

"Crime... it was not. But how strange."

I replied in no time at all.

"Forging the date on the CDs the police couldn't lay hand on. From what I've just heard, I must assume there isn't anyone who could've done it but you, right? How about that, any explanations?"

"... Ah."

It was quite a rare sight. That demon lord was shaken.

"I see, so it really was you."

"No, that's, wait a tick."

The demon lord glared at me with sharp eyes, a sour look on his face.

"You have a point," without paying any particular mind to the demon lord, Prosecutor Schaefer spoke in a monotone.

"But why would he have to do something like that? He has no motive."

“R-right. What motive would I have to do it?”

“Motive, is it?”

I recalled what I had investigated.

The date changed. The dead person was changed out. Demon lord and hero switched.

Every part of this crime was switched around. Why would he expressly do that? No, that isn't it. What result would swapping around give birth to?

On the contrary, what if they weren't swapped? If Claudia was scheduled to come on the 11th instead of the 10th, what would happen?

In that case, the one to die wouldn't have been Andre McHirsh, but Hal Anderson, right?

Meaning the demon lord was scheduled to die. By swapping, the death switched from the demon lord to the hero.

And that's what happened. The demon lord lived, the hero died.

“Why did he switch the date? It was for the demon lord to murder the hero.”

“Ha, haha. What's with that? Why would I have to kill my own brother?”

Yes? Brother? Ah, right. To the demon lord, the hero Roland Rheinland was his twin brother.

... No, I see. His real goal was...

“The one I'm talking about isn't Roland Rheinland. It's the defendant, Claudia Rheinland.”

“Hah? What do you mean by that?”

A vein popped up on the demon lord, as he raised a threatening voice.

“In the first place, this incident would never have taken place without Claudia Rheinland, a person who saw the demon lord as the absolute evil. She was educated from infancy that the demon lord was absolute evil, and lived believing it. And she held the only weapon capable of killing the demon lord, the holy sword Blutgang.”

... Meaning the demon lord's natural enemy, I asserted to the court.

“To the demon lord struck down in the Great War fifty years ago, the sole person in the world who could kill them would surely be a hindrance. Naturally, he’d scheme to get them out of the picture. But even if he thought to kill her, she wasn’t a foe he could defeat so easily.”

... That’s why he chose to erase her from society, I said.

“The demon lord and hero were twins. Their faces were identical, to an extent where it wouldn’t be strange to mistake them for one another. To someone seeing them for the first time, it would not be strange at all to mistake them. Instigated with false information that the demon lord would be on the roof of Westminster Hotel on November the 10th, the defendant came to slay them. Even if she knew his face beforehand, as long as they looked the same, she’d undoubtedly attack.”

“Fu, fwahahaha. And I was wondering what you were about to say.”

There was sweat on the demon lord’s forehead. He let out a somewhat relieved voice.

“Then isn’t that girl the culprit after all? I don’t know who in their right mind would’ve instigated her, but that’s quite the fool’s tale.”

“Meaning you wish to say this was his plot to murder the hero?”

Prosecutor Schaefer sneered, “What a farce.”

“It was a plan to make this hero, Claudia Rheinland out as a murderer, and have her sentenced either to death or life in prison.”

“Hmm. Certainly, if you abused our country’s legal system, it would be possible.”

The judge furrowed his brow, letting out a somber voice.

“Exactly, m’lud.”

I agreed with the judge, and continued.

“But then came a miscalculation. He thought she could come on November 11th, yet the defendant came one day early. This was the greatest miscalculation the true culprit could make.”

“What? That’s no miscalculation, right? That’s just as planned, isn’t it?”

Prosecutor Schaefer raised a confused objection, but I shook my head.

“No, that’s wrong. It had to be a miscalculation. In that photo of Andre McHirsh from before, he was wearing glasses. At first, I didn’t think too much about it, but looking back on it now, it feels off. This is just conjecture, but it’s likely that Andre McHirsh usually wore glasses to give himself a completely different impression from Hal Anderson.”

... Why would he do such a thing? I said it so the whole court could hear.

“The answer is simple. They had planned to modify the date from the start when they were employed as security guards. This was a crime based on a detailed plan.”

The court was ruled by silence. No one let out a word, as they waited for my next.

So I continued.

“By the original plan, it’s likely Andre McHirsh and Hal Anderson were supposed to switch the footage out for the 10th and 11th. When the defendant, meaning Claudia Rheinland was killed, swapping it would create an alibi, and make an impossible crime possible.”

“Yes?” The judge made a dubious expression? “What would that mean? You aren’t making any sense here.”

“The original plan was probably to kill the defendant. And by that plan, on the 10th, Hal Anderson would be standing in as a guard at the hotel, while Andre McHirsh killed the defendant.”

Hypothetically, said Prosecutor Schaefer as she continued on.

“If the labels for the footage of the 10th and 11th were swapped, and the body was left to be found on the 11th as well, then what would happen? If the 11th was investigated, then Hal Anderson would be shown on the security footage, so he would have an alibi, of course that would be Andre McHirsh disguised as Anderson. And on the actual 11th, Hal Anderson would pretend to be Andre McHirsh, stand in some conspicuous spot and spend his day there to

make an alibi for McHirsh. I suppose the defense is trying to insinuate something idiotic and convoluted like that.”

“Urk, you’re making my head hurt here, the both of you.”

The judge stoked his thinning head to sooth it.

“But then there wouldn’t really be a need to swap out guards.”

“It was a precaution. Our current level of forensic science is high. Even if the body was found on the 12th, if autopsied, it would be evident at once that the death happened on the 10th.”

“Right.”

Prosecutor Schaefer supplemented.

“But even by knowing the real time of death was the 10th, the true culprit Andre McHirsh was properly captured on camera, so he had an alibi. There were quite a few tricks behind it. But there was a fatal error in this scheme.”

The demon lord remained silent. But his pain-stained expression indicated there was something he wanted to say.

“In order to alter the date stamp, they would have to enter the monitoring room. It’s likely that at first, they thought they would be able to enter without problem owing to them being twins. But that room wouldn’t even let identical twins pass.”

“Oh? Is that so? But if their DNA patterns are identical, I can’t think of a way to stop it.”

On the judge’s question, I shook my head.

“No, that isn’t the case. The human iris experiences random changes within the first year of birth. Even if they were identical twins, their iris patterns would not match. That’s why they had to play one another.”

I pointed at the Demon Lord, and declared.

“The demon lord revived? So what? He was returned to zero years old, right? Then it was no good. It didn’t matter, twins or not. I’m sure he could use quite a splendid magic, but it didn’t work, too bad.”

“Oh shut it!”

The demon lord raged and hit the witness stand. He hit it so strongly it was smashed to pieces.

“You just keep on rambling on and on. And so what? It’s true I couldn’t enter the monitoring room. But that doesn’t shake my standing at all. So what if you drafted up some scheme on paper. Even by it, that doesn’t change the fact that woman is a murderer!”

“Hmm, the witness does have a point, but... I’m not sure what to think about destroying the...”

“You say something?”

Glared at with a face more fearsome than ever before, the judge weakly muttered, “No, it was nothing.”

... Whap, as if to reset things the judge continued deliberations.

“Hmm, the defense’s opinion is definitely interesting, but it feels to be quite lacking in foundation. And based on what you’ve said, it’s almost as if the witness and the murdered Andre McHirsh were partners in crime, or is that just me...”

“...!”

The judge speaks the truth. I was so caught up in objecting, I didn’t notice, but as it is, it’s as if I’m stating them accomplices.

What’s this? I had just tried working off of some circumstantial evidence, but...

The hero Roland Rheinland should be Claudia’s grandfather. In that case, it would be strange for him to take action to kill her, right?

Does that mean my conjecture is mistaken?

After making such high-and-mighty claims for so long, for me to be mistaken was quite a shock.

... No, that’s wrong.

I recalled my conversation with Claudia in the visiting room, and came to a

new conclusion.

“That’s exactly right, m’lud.”

I declared.

“This so called demon lord and hero, Andre McHirsh and Hal Anderson were accomplices. They were pursuing nothing but their own interests, bringing this incident about.”

The Identity of Another

Something I thought up inadvertently, and said without any verification. But for some strange reason, I had the feeling it was the truth.

No proof. But I did get a response.

Having pulverized the witness stand, the demon lord's body was exposed. He glared straight at me, confrontationally.

His eyes clearly held hostility, but that was actually comforting.

It seems I've reached a truth he didn't want touched.

The people in the court were urging us to speak on. Their silence was more pressuring than anything.

"After the previous trial ended, I met with the defendant."

I said it calmly. Everyone inclined their ears. Within all that, the one looking at me especially heatedly was Claudia.

"At that time, I received a crucial piece of testimony from the defendant. Claudia!"

I called her name. Her shoulders perked up as she answered, "Yes!"

"As I recall, you said the following in the meeting."

"Eh?"

Leaving her incomprehensive face aside, I went on.

"When you resided in that forest, you saw the holy sword cut someone once and once alone."

"Ah, yes."

"There's no doubt it was your father, right?"

"... Yes."

"Thank you."

"What was that supposed to prove?"

Prosecutor Schaefer spoke in an irritated tone.

“Don’t you get it? The holy sword Blutgang, no, the Godragon Sword could only originally cut the demon lord, and the hero Roland Rheinland. But in an accident, the defendant’s father was cut once before.”

... There is a possibility the defendant’s father was actually Roland Rheinland, I said.

“... Eh?”

Claudia opened her eyes wide.

“The demon lord and hero were twins. Then naturally, the hero should be a magi as well. Chief Researcher Samantha.”

At first no one responded, but after a few seconds passed, her oxygen canister twitched, and Samantha stood straight up.

“W... wwwwhat is it?”

“There’s something I’d like to ask you. I’ve heard magi live around three times the lifespan of a human, is that true?”

“Yes, you’re not mistaken. For the first five years from birth, magi grow at around the same rate, but after that, their aging begins to slow. Those who have lived fifty years generally look to be in their twenties or thirties.”

“Thank you for that.”

I looked at the demon lord for a moment.

... It’s true the Great War ended over fifty years ago, yet he looked like he was in his early twenties.

“The demon lord has a long lifespan. The holy sword can only cut the demon lord and hero. And this is the most important thing, Death’s Jewel can only revive the dead. There is only one conclusion these three points lead us to. Fifty years ago, when Death’s Jewel was used, and the demon lord revived, the hero did not revive with him. The reason being that the hero was not dead at the time, and he had gone off to raise defendant Claudia Rheinland in the dark forest.”

“Wait a second.”

Prosecutor Schaefer cut in.

“Then why does the defendant believe Roland Rheinland to be her own grandfather?”

“We won’t be able to say for certain without the individual here, but we can make conjecture.”

I hesitated for a moment, but decided to say what was on my mind.

“Roland Rheinland likely knew that the demon lord would revive someday. So hero Roland raised Claudia to kill him on his eventual revival. However, the demon lord and hero were twins... I’m sure he didn’t want to add any unnecessary evil thoughts to the murder.”

I feigned serenity. But I couldn’t bring myself to look at Claudia.

Since the individual wasn’t here, perhaps I should have said something more heartwarming, more love-filled for the poor girl. I regretted it a bit. But seeing the, ah, as I thought, faces around the court, perhaps I wouldn’t be able to satisfy them if I hadn’t made that claim.

What a terrible man I am.

“If after the hero Roland Rheinland defeated the demon lord, he changed his residence to the Dark Forest, and lived there until he died a natural death, he does not fulfill the condition of Death’s Jewel only being able to bring back the dead. Because of that, the demon lord’s claim that the hero was revived as well fifty years ago is mistaken.”

“Then who, might I enquire, are you saying was revived?”

The demon lord provoked me. His tone was a high one that told tales of, ‘there’s no way you’d know,’ as he gave a fearless smile.

“Of course, it was the demon lord.”

“Hmm, the demon lord, is it... defense, are you properly listening to this trial? What’s been asked is who was revived besides the demon lord.”

“M’lud. I was listening properly, and I didn’t give the wrong answer. Fifty

years ago, when the demon lord died, and Death's Jewel revived him, he was sure enough revived as twins. But that wasn't a demon lord-hero pair, the demon lord himself was revived in two."

... The demon lord was split from one to two, I claimed.

The Truth (1)

For a moment, I thought time had stopped. Eventually, the court burst into a stir, and an air of chaos ruled the space.

The one who cut the fuse was the judge.

“W-wait just a second there. Isn’t that different from twins?”

“Very different. While it’s true twins boast appearance exceedingly close to one another, when it really comes down to it, they’re different people. Even if they have the same physique, that does not run as far as their hearts.”

“In this case, you mean memory and personality?”

As Prosecutor Schaefer said it level-headedly, I agreed.

“Exactly. Fifty years ago, when the demon lord was brought back from death, it meant there now existed two demon lords.”

“But what sort of relation does that have to this case?”

I answered the judge’s question.

“It changes from hero and demon lord to demon lord and demon lord, it will show you a completely new outlook on this scene. Are you listening? Once upon a time, in the era of the Great War, there was no one able to harm the demon lord besides that demon lord himself. Until the holy sword came into the equation, the demon lord had no enemies. Besides himself.”

... The demon lord’s true enemy was himself, I said.

“The only person in the world who could kill him was so close by. I’m sure this was a threat to someone who had always thought themselves strongest in the world. If possible, he’d want to get rid of him. But his foe had the same level of power as him. They wouldn’t die off so easily.”

I said one thing that came to mind. Without thinking of what sort of development this line would lead to, I continued emitting whatever words came to my head.

“Right, as I can’t kill him myself, I’ll call in someone who can. That is the truth of this case.”

It felt terribly refreshing. The hazy outline of the case that had been drifting around rapidly converged, and put itself in order.

... What, so it was something so simple.

“M’lud. As I thought, the true culprit of this case is not the defendant. The man over there is the culprit, and the ringleader.”

“Hmm, then let us hear the defense’s opinion.”

“Yes. Let’s begin at the start. The spark that set off this incident was a letter delivered to the defendant from sender unknown.”

“Oh, a letter?”

The judge looked at the defendant and asked. “Is that true?”

“U-um, yes. It’s true.”

“Hmm, then defense. Please continue.”

Claudia held her sword tight, answering with an expression that looked like it would break at any moment. I took my eyes off of her, turned to the judge, and continued my claims.

“The letter stated that the demon lord would appear at Westminster Hotel on November the 10th at 9:00 pm. Having been taught the demon lord was evil from infancy, Claudia Rheinland trusted that information, and arrived at the hotel. She attacked the person who appeared at the scene.”

I paused my words for a moment, looking around the court. Without any doubt, everyone was looking at me.

“At that time, who did the defendant believe that individual was?”

I went on.

“She likely recognized him as the demon lord. At the time, she didn’t know what sort of face the demon lord had, but if the holy sword could cut him he must be the demon lord, so perhaps she thought it was fine to confirm it after taking a swipe.”

With a somewhat sadistic look on her face, Prosecutor Schaefer spoke.

“Oh, is that your guess? Hey, girly. Big sis wants to hear it from your mouth. How did it feel to slash down at a complete stranger from behind?”

“M’lud. The prosecution’s current statement was irrelevant to the case. I would like to deny that testimony request.”

Seeing Claudia’s pained face, I immediately objected.

“Hmm, I uphold the defense’s objection.”

“Oh, how unfortunate.”

But while she said that, she made a somewhat exhilarated expression. “Then can we hear what comes next,” she urged.

I didn’t mind being the bad guy. But I didn’t want to make one out of Claudia.

Keeping of the prosecution’s offhand statements, I continued my claims.

“It’s likely that the one she attacked on the 10th was Hal Anderson. In order to fool the camera, he had swapped with Andre McHirsh, and was in the middle of his security guard job.”

“Mhm? Then they did plan on murdering the defendant?”

“Yes, they had such a plan set up between them. But as I said before, the demon lord’s true aim wasn’t the hero but the demon lord. It’s likely the one who sent the envelope wasn’t Hal Anderson, but Andre McHirsh. And Hal Anderson thought the defendant wouldn’t be coming on the 10th, but the 11th.”

I recalled the security camera footage. In that footage, Hal Anderson looked awfully surprised.

“Just as the defendant was lured with the envelope, Hal Anderson was lured out by the other demon lord.”

... And the incident happened, I continued.

“The defendant attacked Hal Anderson from behind. But his wound was light, and he did not die in one blow.”

“Then where did he go after that?”

Prosecutor Schaefer gave her objection.

“Even if he didn’t die from that strike, if the fall’s what killed him, it’s still murder in the end, isn’t it?”

“No. That isn’t possible. Even if you fell from the roof, falling into that park would be impossible.”

With a mildly miffed look on her face, “Why’s that?” the prosecutor asked.

“That’s because it would be impossible to fall with that hotel’s construction. On a floor below that hotel’s roof is a veranda that sticks itself out ever-so-slightly. If one fell from the height of one floor, it would definitely hurt, but I doubt it would kill anyone. Especially not the demon lord. Perhaps he even escaped completely uninjured.”

“Hmm, I see. That’s quite a novel outlook.”

The judge closed both his eyes, his face deep in thought.

“But in that case, a single contradiction is born. By that security camera feed, the victim falls and his right arm is severed. If those words are to be taken as true, it would have been impossible for anyone to fall, right?”

“Yes. Of course, it’s impossible. But please remember. That camera footage was taken not from the 10th, but the 11th. ”

... That one was real, I said.

“It’s true the rooftop camera footage was falsified. But there’s no guarantee the same can be said for the others. More so, that one was genuine. After Hal Anderson escaped with his life on the roof, he got back at Andre McHirsh, and managed to kill him.”

... That’s why it was severed post-mortem, m’lud, I loudly declared to the court.

The Truth (2)

“On the night of the 10th, Hal Anderson was attacked by the defendant, and fell from the roof. But Hal Anderson didn’t fall into the park, he fell into the veranda of the floor below. That is what the defense claims.”

... Does the prosecution have any objections? I added on.

Prosecutor Schaefer only formed a grin on her lips, plainly answering, “No objections.”

“Hold it, that’s where you should be objecting!”

The demon lord who’d been calm and composed to that point was flustered. With his forceful stare, he intimidated the female prosecutor, but Prosecutor Schaefer made a scoffing gesture as she offered the word, “silence.”

“I don’t really care either way. As long as the culprit is caught, judged, given the maximum amount of pain, and yields to their sentence, I really don’t care. It’s not like I’m going to press the defendant for your sake or anything. I believe the law is always right, but I myself am not. If I know I’m wrong, I’ll gracefully step down.”

“W-what’s with that!?”

Right now, it felt as if he was trying to take out his anger on something. But as he’d already destroyed the witness stand, there was nothing left for him to break. The demon lord could only send a look of something exceeding malice towards the prosecution.

“Ahem. Ehm, then defense. Could you continue on?”

The judge urged me on. It seems he didn’t really want to be entangled with that demon lord.

“Ah, um, yes. Then next I’d like to explain who exactly it was that fell.”

It was a strange sight.

At the start, everyone in the court was our... no Claudia’s enemy. But I wonder how it was now. When they were all banding together to label Claudia

as evil, the situation was gradually beginning to change.

... I can... win?

I began embracing such hope. Admonishing my fickle heard, I continued onwards.

“On the 10th, Hal Anderson did not die. Then who was the individual we witnessed falling into the park? Naturally, that would have to be the other security guard, Andre McHirsh.”

... Andre McHirsh was the victim in this case, I proclaimed.

“On the night of the 10th, Hal Anderson managed to avoid major damage from the defendant’s blow, and on the next day he killed Andre McHirsh. There’s a possibility it was even on that same day.”

“Hmm, and why is that?”

The judge gazed at me full of interest.

“That is... because Andre McHirsh himself was a demon lord as well. This is just speculation, but Andre McHirsh and Hal Anderson had put up a plan to murder the hero from the start. But that was just the outer plan, and Andre McHirsh had a different objective entirely. It was his plan to kill the demon lord.”

... Andre wanted to kill the other demon lord, I said.

“The one who delivered the letter to the defendant’s house should be Andre. And the one who wrote up its contents would be the man himself. He gave instructions in the letter for the defendant to come on the 10th, and proposed to Hal Anderson he would be murdering the hero on the 11th.”

“Then that’s quite the shrewd criminal plan.”

Prosecutor Schaefer sneered.

“That’s right. By Andre McHirsh’s plan, Hal would probably have a safe mindset thinking no one was coming that day, and suffer a surprise attack from the hero, or so was planned. But that’s not how it went down. The demon lord made a narrow escape, and succeeded in running to the floor below. On the

other hand, the defendant herself misunderstood that she had killed the demon lord as well, and left. By Andre's plan, he had to be away from the scene on the 10th to create an alibi, but the possibility he chose a time at his own discretion and eventually returned is high. He needed to see if his plan had succeeded or not, after all. So without much time passing since the defendant attacked the demon lord, Andre McHirsh reached the scene."

"I see, and that's where they met. His other self who should have died."

Schaefer happily said my conclusion before me. For some reason I felt as if she had made off with the good part, and it wasn't too satisfying.

"Yes, well, that's how it would have to be. Andre thought Hal had already died, so perhaps he had let his guard down. There, the still-alive Hal Anderson got back at him."

After expressing that claim, I spoke to the judge.

"The defense claims this. After the victim murdered the true culprit, on the 11th around nine pm, timing it with when the defendant had attacked him on the 10th, he dropped the body off the hotel veranda. Why did he do such a thing? The answer is simple. In order to falsify the surveillance camera date. On November 12th, in the early morning, the police received a report and hurried to the scene, retrieving the security camera footage within the day."

... But here, a single problem comes up.

"In order to collect the hotel's surveillance footage, you need to ride the elevator in the guard room, and go to the third floor monitoring room. The only one who can go to the third floor is the guard who has a shift on that day. Even if you're a guard, if it isn't your shift, you can't go up. Even for twins. As long as the iris scan of the biometric system was in place, it wouldn't let any outsider through. Meaning on the day of the incident, the only person who could enter the monitoring room on the day of the incident was... the culprit."

Without any hesitation, I glared at the demon lord and declared.

"You are the culprit behind this case."

I indicted the true culprit. But no one was surprised when I said it.

At some point, everyone in the court had begun to suspect it. I had only explained it and nothing more.

Violence

“Those are quite some novel claims.”

I felt a chill down my spine. The owner of the voice was Prosecutor Schaefer. When this woman said things like that, market price dictates that she would likely state something quite inconvenient for my case.

... What did she plan on saying?

“If those claims are true, it’s a major discovery great enough to overturn history. If they’re true, that is.”

... But that’s no good, Prosecutor Schaefer said in a frank tone devoid of emotion.

“This world isn’t weak enough to be rot away by foolish drivel. Each and every one of them were foolish claims not even worth believing. Just listening is enough to make me vomit. Mr. Lawyer, are you one of those useless folk?”

Without a single blink, the woman in the prosecutor seat looked straight at me.

“Kuku, hahahaha!”

The demon lord’s laughter echoed through the court.

“Hahaha! Right, that’s right. Who the hell’s going to believe that drivel? Everything you’ve said has been nothing but rash remarks without any basis.”

On the demon lord’s words, the prosecutor and judge’s foreheads furrowed. The judge let out a deep sigh.

“Sure enough, the witness’ words are correct. No matter how suspicious of a person he may be, as long as there’s no evidence, it is not possible to convict him.”

... After coming so far, evidence.

I guess that goes without saying.

This oblivious girl in the dock was undoubtedly arrested on evidence, and

submitted for genuine deliberation.

She was a questionable person. The evidence and testimony was in order. Without a fragment of guilt in her being, looked on from the side, she was an individual beyond saving.

But the situation changed. I dug through each piece of evidence, searching for the truth, and the time where I could finally prove her innocence had come.

Having come so far, I wouldn't let it end on conjecture and prejudice. If I'm going to do it, I'll end it with decisive evidence.

"I do have evidence."

I said.

"I shall present evidence that shows the defense's claims to be true, and the defendant to be innocent."

"Hah? There's no way you have any."

The demon lord's voice grew smaller. His overflowing confidence seemed somewhat fleeting, symmetrical to Claudia.

She was holding her back up straight, simply keeping her attention on me.

As always, she was preciously holding the holy sword close to her body. But she looked different than she had been to that point.

She was alright. I was convinced as I saw her relieved face, as if it had been released from a demon's clutches.

Prosecutor Schaefer urged me on. "You have evidence? Then show it."

"The victim isn't that man over there. He used Death's Jewel fifty years ago, and not anytime recently. And the person the defendant, no Claudia Rheinland first attacked was the true culprit. Once I've said that much, showing evidence is simple."

I pointed at the demon lord. And spoke.

"Strip."

A certain silence descended on the court. Eventually, excitement spread alongside the noise.

“There’s no doubt you’re the culprit. So you definitely have it somewhere. The mark from when Claudia attacked you on November 11th, a mark on your back.”

Claudia attacked the demon lord. The security camera feed recited that fact as reality.

“Hmm, truly. If the defense’s claims are true, then there should be a mark from the holy sword on that witness’ back. Witness, what will you do? You have the right to keep silent. If you refuse to remove your clothing, I will have to assume you are asserting that right, and we cannot do anything about it, but...”

“At that moment, you’ll be arrested.”

Having a witness arrested in the middle of a trial was a rare sight in the history of the law. But did this selfish, unprecedented female prosecutor care about such a thing?

“I’ve got mountains of other charges. First off, perjury, trespassing, forging identification papers. Each and every one of them, taking a magi’s lifespan into account, they’re charges that won’t amount to any sentence too great, but I can still arrest you on them. Ah, another thing, I’d also like you to accompany me as a suspect for an incident resulting in bodily harm that happened this morning.”

This morning? Could it be... where Jessica was attacked?

It was coming together. That’s what I thought. If he took off his clothes, the decisive evidence would come out. But even if he did, he couldn’t escape arrest.

If they arrested him, as long as they gave him a full-body search, the wound on his back would be found regardless.

Whichever the case, he couldn’t run anymore. He couldn’t use the law as his shield to flee anymore. It was a complete victory.

... Right, I won. Thank god.

Maybe my tension slackened, I sat in my chair as if falling into it.

When I turned to Claudia, I found her looking at me with wide eyes. Our eyes met. When I sent her a loose smile, the corners of her lips rose, and she showed her first true smile.

She was surprisingly cute.

“Do you have anything to say?”

The judge’s words snapped me to my senses. The trial wasn’t over yet. I can’t let my guard down until the end.

The judge urged the demon lord to say something, but he quietly continued his silence. Narrowing his eyes, and thinking over something.

... What is it?

The demon lord showed immense confidence in himself. At times he would become emotional, but he often carried around a calm and composed air. When it came to such a man, when he was so expressionless, it was a bit of a let down.

I thought he’s thrash around more in his rage, but contrary to my expectations, while he looked mildly disturbed, when put in a predicament where there was nothing he could do, perhaps he had chosen to accept it.

“There’s no helping it.”

In a small, terribly small voice, the demon lord muttered. It was a voice so small, I wondered if I was the only person who could catch it.

The demon lord approached one of the bailiffs. Taking the man’s silence as his expression of his right to it, perhaps the bailiff planned to arrest him.

The bailiff tried to grab the demon lord’s arm. But the bailiff’s arm was the one that was grabbed.

“Don’t touch me.”

It was a moment’s happenings. The demon lord twisted the man’s arm and twisted it some more as if wringing out a dust cloth, before tossing it down to the floor like a dust cloth all the same.

“Ggyaaaaaaaaah!”

A scream travelled across the court. From the bailiff’s arm, a fountain of blood burst out, and he raised a voice of pain as he began writhing on the ground.

“Aren’t you misunderstanding something? The reason I’ve been so quiet to

now is because I quite like my current lifestyle. A reason of that level. So I don't really mind, turning to violence."

... Today's the Easter of the demon lord, the man said with a sinister expression on his head.

"As I start, I'll make a bloodbath of everyone here."

Cries rose out from the gallery. Standing from their seats, scrambling to be the first to leave the court. The courtroom erupted into chaos, their thundering roars and scream resonated, causing even greater confusion.

With just a few words, the people had fallen into fear and lost their rationality. The only ones who didn't try to run were me, the prosecutor, and the judge whose legs had given way.

As the people of the gallery broke into panic and tried to flee, for some reason I felt entranced.

Wiping off the blood sticking to his arm with a piece of cloth, the demon lord soon turned to look at me. As if he had found his next mark, with a terribly pleasant expression.

"What did you do with the body?"

What was wrong with me? The one before my eyes was the lowest, the worst demon lord who only saw human life as trash, and was even trying to kill me as we speak.

When my body was stiff with tension, my heart was awfully quiet.

I simply made a question from pure curiosity.

"The body? Oh, the remaining body. I didn't mind leaving the right arm behind, but I couldn't really go about leaving the rest of it, you see. If that was at the scene, the trick I thought up would be exposed. So I properly disposed of it."

"How?"

"Ate it."

I questioned my ears.

“I ate it. Ate it, ate it, ate it, ate it, ate it, ate it. My own precious body full of my own precious magic. Without leaving a scrap of flesh, I savored it. It was a feast.”

... So there's no point in searching for it, young Lawyer, said the demon lord as he raised the corners of his mouth.

“You look delicious too. You defeated a demon lord's mind. Surely you must have the tastiest of brains on you. I'm quite interested. How will you taste.”

The demon lord's cold eyes shone down on me. With that alone, my muscles tense, and I couldn't move.

“Just kidding.”

The demon lord took another step towards me.

“Humans taste awful. Unlike the noble magi, they're a vulgar existence. I'd never partake in such filthy lifeforms even if it killed me. That's why you're just going to die without meaning.”

I could barely even see the demon lord's second step. It was such a swift and skillful movement, my eyes were unable to follow, and before I knew it the demon lord was standing before me.

He opened his mouth. But instead of a voice, a red liquid began to flow out of it.

“I won't let him die.”

It wasn't just the demon lord before me.

Her build was so small it didn't enter my notice, but Claudia was definitely there as well.

Her head came up to the demon lord's chest. Taking a stance with her sword, she had thrust straight into his heart.

And Claudia's chest had been pierced by his sharp right hand in kind.

Perhaps the demon lord could change the shape of his own claws at will. His nails were needlessly sharp, more than enough to pierce through a girl's slender body.

Claudia pulled out the sword. A strong wave of blood gushed out of the demon lord's body, dying her torso a deep red. Eventually, the demon lord fell, and the arm thrust into Claudia's chest fell away with him.

Both Claudia and the demon lord were left with holes in their chests.

Whose blood was covering me, I wondered.

Looking down, I found a large pool of blood had formed on the courtroom floor, but I could only stare at it blankly.

Eventually, my mind started clearing up; almost collapsing out of my chair, I approached Claudia.

"Oy, get a grip."

Her face stained with blood was filled with anguish.

"Mr. Lawyer, it hurts."

"I'll call a doctor at once. You'll have to hold out until then."

"It hurts, it hurts, it hurts, why did it have to come to this?"

"Like I'd know. It's because you charged in like an idiot. Why did you try to save me? You hate me, don't you? Just leave me be."

"I hate you. I never should have saved you. I never thought... it would hurt so much."

... But Claudia spoke in a feeble tone.

"... But I'm glad. That you're safe."

Claudia closed her eyes, and didn't say any more.

Even now, there were screams and cries echoing through the court. The audience in a frenzy, entangling themselves more. But I suddenly stopped caring about all of that.

I simply wanted to save her, save Claudia. That's all.

I held her small body, desperately crying out. But before the crowd's mania, my words wouldn't reach anyone, resounding fruitlessly.

Epilogue

From somewhere far away, I heard a cry.

A terrible sort of cry that pierced my ears, and eventually realizing the cry was coming from a baby, my body shuddered.

On the first floor of the hospital were various sorts from children to elders, and within that was a middle-aged woman holding a baby.

At first, the baby let out an earnest cry, but comforted by his mother, the crying gradually stopped, and he eventually smiled.

That smile without any wickedness in his heart was truly an angel. But the current me could only doubt what sort of deep darkness was embraced behind that smile.

December, still a season for the snow to be in full bloom, I was a person(s) concerned, and from here on, I would have to fill out various paperwork before I could head to the hospital room.

I confirmed the nameplate on the room read Claudia Rheinland before I entered without knocking.

In that room provided to accommodate severely ill patients, there was only one bed. Atop the bed, Claudia in a clean, white patient gown closed both her eyes, as she lay.

She looked alive enough from the side. But with a gentle expression on her face, she wouldn't make the slightest move from the bed as she faced up.

I approached the bed, and pinched her small nose so she couldn't breathe. "Oy, wake up."

After a while, Claudia's pale skin rapidly began turning red, eventually, "I-I'm dying..." she let out a small groan. It felt as if she really would die, so I removed my hand, and tapped against her forehead.

"Ow! Ah, Mr. Lawyer, good morning."

"Morning. How are you feeling?"

“The worst. I was seeing a good dream partway through, but it suddenly became a nightmare.”

“Hmm, I see. What sort of nightmare?”

“... I’ve forgotten.”

“I see.”

“Why are you here today?”

“Yeah, today I came with some important notices for you. First, the demon lord just died.”

I thought she would be more surprised. But contrary to my expectations, Claudia was calm, closing her eyes, as she muttered, “Is that so.”

“Yeah, but he came back. The demon lord had stored one of Death’s Jewels in his body. He returned to zero years old, apparently.”

“Did they let him die on purpose because they wanted to see that?”

Claudia made a dubious face.

... When she was the one who delivered the fatal blow.

I stared at the holy sword carefully placed on the bedside table as I sighed.

“No. They were too late. That’s all. Of course, the same could be said for you. Good work coming back from the land of the dead. I’m glad you look well.”

“... I learned quite a bit in my hospitalization. This country’s medical technology is amazing.”

... But, Claudia said as she stared out the window.

“The scar is going to remain for the rest of my life, it seems.”

Claudia’s chest and back had a mark from when the demon lord pierced her through.

“The world’s a vast one. I’ve heard there’s a magician out there who can mend scars even medicine cannot.”

“No, I’m fine. I’ll keep this wound company for the rest of my life. More importantly, what will happen to that person?”

... That person? Oh, the demon lord.

“Sorry to say, he will receive judgement. Since we don’t have any international treaties, we can’t judge him for his war crimes, but he has been indicted for murder. That is all.”

Of course, now that the accused was zero years of age, I can’t say for sure what sort of legal procedures they would take against him. I’m sure that female prosecutor will do something about it.

“I see. It seems things usually work out one way or another, surprisingly enough.”

“That’s right. There’s no need to make yourself feel responsible or anything. If you push all the troublesome stuff onto someone else, it usually gets resolved.”

... But, I added on,

“I was saved because of you. To me, you’re a splendid hero. Thank you.”

“Ah, um, that’s well, I’m the one who should be thanking you this time.”

She looked like she was going to cry for a moment, but she immediately pushed through, her face turning red as she said it.

Perhaps she was embarrassed.

“No, I don’t need your thanks. More importantly, I have something I have to give you.”

Exceedingly calm, I took out a bundle of papers from my bag.

“What’s that?”

Ignoring Claudia’s blank expression, I smiled as I spoke.

“An invoice.”

With a thud, I slammed the invoice onto the table.

“Eh? Eh?”

“First, the hospital’s impatient fee, treatment fee, medical examination fee. Adding them all up, that comes to five hundred thousand gold. Next, we come to property damage. Claudia, it seems you rampaged your heart out in the

detention center. And as you injured both guards and inmates, you'll have to cover their medical fees. And next is this, inflicting bodily harm to the demon lord, that's a three hundred thousand gold fine. Adding them all together, it easily exceeds a million gold. Well, just be glad you weren't arrested."

"Um, well, I don't have any money."

"I see. Then you'll have to pay in installments."

"B-but can't this be covered by public expenditure?"

"If you were a citizen of this country, and you properly paid the insurance premium, then sure it would. But you don't have a nationality, do you?"

"Um, that's..."

Claudia tapered her mouth, making an unpleasant face.

"Don't start sulking now. Here, I'll give you this."

Besides the invoice, I handed over a certificate of residence.

"Trouble this country a little longer."

"Eh? Are you sure?"

"Yeah. You don't have anywhere to go, right?"

"Um, um, thank you."

"Don't mind it. For processing all the paperwork, I'll be demanding a hundred thousand gold later."

"... Even that costs money?"

"Of course. This time, I just happened to take on a criminal case, but I'm specialized in civil cases to begin with. These sorts of paperworks are my specialty. So I have to charge for my services."

As she hung her head heartbroken, I spoke.

"It's too early to feel down. The demon lord is still alive. Let's go demand some consolation money out of him. He's surprisingly an economist, so he has quite a bit stored away, apparently."

... We'll go take everything he has, I said, and Claudia made a smile for the

first time in a while. There, “Ah, it hurts, ow, ow, ow.” She raised a groan as she held her chest.

“Are you alright?”

“I’m not alright. Saying such a thing to a critical patient, you’re quite an evil lawyer.”

“There’s no helping it. The world runs on money. I just found myself working as a court-appointed lawyer. I don’t have much financial leisure.”

“... I never said I wouldn’t pay. But as I’ve said, I don’t have any money.”

“Then go work.”

“I can’t work. Um, I don’t know how to work.”

After letting out a deep sigh, “Then there’s no helping it,” I continued.

“One of our office’s clerks quit just recently. I’m short on hands. Want to work at my place?”

“Are you sure?”

“Why not. In exchange, I’ll work you to the bone.”

“Yes, I’ll leave it to you.”

Something large had begun to move. That’s the feeling I got. Claudia deeply lowered her head, eventually looking at me. Her expression was bright without a single cloud.

I can’t say she had a rosy future, but if it was this girl, I got the feeling things would work out.

“Ah, come to think of it, you were sued.”

“Eh? By who?”

“The demon lord. Remember, you attacked him. With the holy sword. He’s demanding compensation for that, it seems.”

Of course, he was only buying time. Now that he’d used Death’s Jewel to revert his age, that demon lord didn’t have a fragment of magic left in him.

He would need power if he wanted to break out. So he was buying time to

regain his magic, I'm sure.

It was idiotic to keep his filibuster company, but this was a country of law. If you're sued, you have to take the adequate response. It was exceedingly a pain. If during that time, the demon lord stored up his power and broke out, it would be an even greater pain. But if that happened, I'm sure someone would do something about it.

Claudia made a troubled expression.

"When he's a demon lord, he plans to charge the hero?"

She said, laughing a little at the end.